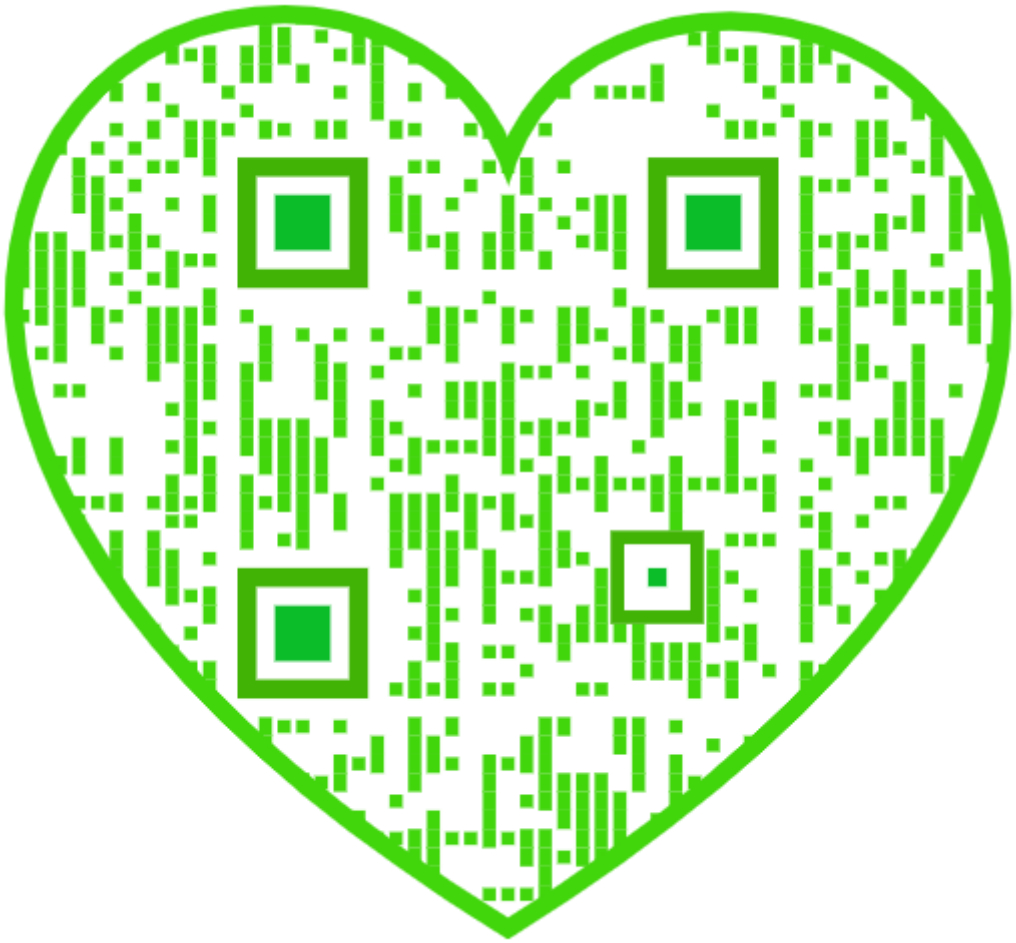
FISHING AND FISHERS



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FISHING AND FISHERS

THE WELLAND, ST. JAMES' DEEPING, NEAR PETERBOROUGH.—*Page* 124.

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Fishing and Fishers

By J. PAUL TAYLOR

FIRST HON. SEC. FLY-FISHERS' CLUB

WITH INTRODUCTION BY "RED SPINNER" (W. SENIOR)

ILLUSTRATED

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Introduction

MY good friend, the author of this book, asked me to write an Introduction for it. Why should I? Why should I not? These questions he answered so satisfactorily, to himself if not to me, that I most heartily consented, but on the understanding that the few words I wrote should not be required to be praise or blame, approval or disapproval, agreement or disagreement; nor were they to be regarded as a sort of certificate of the author's high morals, physical health, mental superiority, or worldly solvency. The chapters of a book should, and of course always do, speak for themselves; and in these days your readers will, exceeding soon, form opinions on their own account. Under these circumstances to set out on the path of eulogy of the author, to dilate upon the length of our friendship and its depth, would be an impertinence. But we fishing men—anglers, Waltonians, contemplative recreationists, practitioners of the Gentle Art, or by whatever name we are known—are in truth a very friendly and

amiable set of folks, always excepting on those occasions when one has been more successful at the waterside than another. Brotherly love may then be discontinued for a brief space, though the rule of life is, without question, commendably harmonious.

It comes therefore to this: my good friend, the author of this book, asked me to write an Introduction for it, and I plead no other apology for poaching on his preserves. Further, if the readers enjoy his published pages as much as I have enjoyed a perusal of the proof sheets, it will not be a bad thing for him or his publishers.

There is one reason why I send up a hearty cheer at the launch of this venture; it is that he has, to a great extent, built on my own lines. Very like egotism is this I know. But again, why not? We are told on excellent authority that we may be angry and sin not; and I assume an equal toleration for egotism, which is not necessarily vanity, nor self-conceit, nor brag, nor bounce.

Without therefore pretending for a moment that it has been my good (or ill) fortune to found a school of angling literature, I can modestly vouch that I have restored, if not established, a tolerably sound form, by making popular a type of fishing book intended to interest the class which may be termed non-anglers—calculated to attract to our sport, or at least to enlist the interest of,

readers who cared nought, and knew nothing, about rods, lines, reels, hooks, baits, or methods.

The desire to do this became a possibility away back in the early Seventies, when I was invited by Mr. Richard Gowing, then editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, to contribute a set of articles to that venerable serial. He listened with kindly open ears to the suggestion of fishing papers that should be without technicalities, but whose matter should contain instruction and advice respecting the art of angling, so innocently mixed with morsels of natural history, archæology, communion with nature at large, and all the humanities, that the whole might be swallowed by anybody without a wry face. Hence the "Red Spinner" series of essays which were republished in *Waterside Sketches* and other volumes.

Angling books written in that way are common enough now, but they were not in those days. Francis Francis, a master hand with both rod and pen, once told me, in reply to my expressed admiration of certain passages of beautiful description by him of Hampshire meadows as they flaunt their hawthorns and marsh marigolds in early summer, that he was always afraid to "let himself go" in that course. He held that what his angling readers expected of him was to be told how to dress flies, how to tie new knots, how to become learned in new dodges and wrinkles,

how to kill two trout where one was killed before. We have had no better authority on the practical details of angling than he, nor an author who could express the fulness of knowledge with so much raciness or vigour. Yet it is evident, in all his books, that he considered it his main duty to keep close to the track of practicality; and if he did stray aside it was mostly when allured by some humorous incident which he must tell, and did tell most admirably.

Of Francis, however, it may be said, as of so many who were his predecessors and contemporaries, that with him everything must be subservient to the didactic aspect of his subject. Early in the century there were many writers who were probably not competent to expound the mysteries in full, but who left us delightful works in which a little fishing was made the peg upon which to hang tales of adventure, typographical descriptions of localities or countries, or learned disquisitions on philosophy or science. Some of them, it is true, were too sparing in their statements as to fishing, so that their treatises somewhat resembled the sermon of which it was said that it did not contain enough gospel to save a tomtit.

More than half a century has passed since two of the best sporting books ever written were given us from Scotland. How many of us must there be who have not yet forgotten the joy of the first

reading of Colquhoun's *Moor and the Loch*, first published by Blackwood in 1840, and Scrope's *Days and Nights of Salmon Fishing*, which appeared three years later with lithographs and engravings from Wilkie and the Landseers? Then came St. John's *Wild Sport and Natural History of the Highlands*, and the Rev. H. Newland with his *Erne and its Legends*, and *Forest Scenes in Norway and Sweden*. These are amongst the classics, but they belong to general rather than to angling literature.

In the same category of eminence must be placed Sir Humphrey Davy's *Salmonia; or, Days of Fly-Fishing in a Series of Conversations*. Even this was not generally accepted as a genuine angling work by such bibliographers as the late Thomas Satchell; and it is certainly not so by comparison with books that have of recent years been the vogue.

The works of Sir Humphrey's brother, John—*The Angler in the Lake District*, and *The Angler and His Friend*, published in 1855 and 1857 respectively, should be much more to the taste of the angler; yet they have never been so popular as the book written by his more eminent big brother as a means of amusement (as he tells us) during months of illness. Dr. John's dialogues are lighter than the conversations between Halieus, Poietes, Physicus, and Ornither, and the references to angling are always sound.

Very largely the good angling books of the first

half of the century concerned the grander branches of the sport, and a worthy type of them was (taking it as it occurs to me at the moment) Conway's *Forays among Salmon and Deer*. The smaller game received attention as it happened to come in the way of nobler sport, but the rod was generally a minor implement in the estimation of the traveller or naturalist.

The bottom-fisher was meanwhile well looked after in literature by men acquainted with the Thames and Lea. T. F. Salter, gent., for example, published his *Anglers' Guide* in 1808, and announced in decidedly comprehensive terms that it covered the whole art of angling as practised in the rivers Thames and Lea and other waters twenty miles round London. It was founded on forty years' "practice and observation," and in prosaic fashion dealt with "trolling, bottom-fishing, fly-fishing, and trimmer angling." The less said about his fly-fishing perhaps the better. It was not till 1836 that a treatise on this subject worthy of the name was published, and to this day Ronalds' *Fly-Fishers' Entomology* is a standard reference for fly-dressers and fly-fishers, and an object of desire to all, should it possess the original copper plates representing the principal natural and artificial trout flies in juxtaposition.

A very typical demonstrator of the all-round school was the worthy Hofland, whose *British*

Angler's Manual was published in 1839 with dedication to Sir Francis Chantrey, R.A., who was an accomplished fly-fisher. Perhaps, take it all in all, Hofland should stand first on the list of angling authors at that period, his range being wider than that of his contemporaries. Fishing for thirty years on "the principal rivers, lakes, and trout streams of Great Britain" filled him with knowledge at first-hand, and the book is written in dignified style, with wonderfully minute directions for the making and keeping of tackle.

There are three writers of a later period to whom anglers of the present are deeply indebted, and in truth who are in no danger of being forgotten yet awhile. They are Edward Fitzgibbon, better known as "Ephemera" of *Bell's Life* in its palmy days; Francis Francis, the voluminous author, and for many years angling editor of the *Field*; and Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell, who seems not yet to have thought about getting old, though his first work was published six-and-thirty years ago. It is a little curious that a young poet should make practicality the strong feature of his angling books. *Spinning Tackle; what it is and what it ought to be, with a few words on Fine Fishing* was the title of his first volume, and then followed *The Angler Naturalist*, an incomparably useful work, and *The Book of the Pike*—all in the early Sixties. These treatises were the beginning of a

valuable output of avowedly practical works which led us to the forward stage of progress which is exemplified by such books as Halford's *Floating Flies*, *The Management of Fisheries*, and *Dry Fly Entomology*; Bickerdyke's *All Round Angler* quartette; and the Badminton volumes, not to mention many others.

Amongst the monographic publications one may mention *The Book of the Roach*, by Greville Fennell, *The Book of the Pike*, mentioned on the previous page, and books on the grayling by the late Mr. Pritt and Mr. F. M. Walbran, who is to-day the foremost exponent of fishing in the Yorkshire streams.

One might have supposed that there was nothing more left to say, or be said or sung, about Fish and Fishing. But so far as I know, no one has been heard to cry "Hold, enough!" and angling books are issuing forth in many directions.

To the accepted instructors above-mentioned there have succeeded a procession of writers bent apparently upon entertaining rather than lecturing and teaching. They sketch and plead rather than expound and argue; they lay more stress upon the incidental charms of angling than upon the technicalities of either its sport or the manifold mechanical preparations of tackle. They seem to take it for granted that the reader is well grounded in all the rudiments, and need not be bothered

with the essential but matter-of-fact information that may be found elsewhere.

I hope the author of *Fishing and Fishers* will not be offended if I invite him to place himself in this category, content to know that the giving of pleasure is not less praiseworthy than the imparting of knowledge; and that, while there are those who will accept none but the expert as their Gamaliel, there are others who prefer the guide that will lead them gently into pleasant places, and lightly discourse upon a thousand matters that demand no study and leave the poor brain unracked.

RED SPINNER.

Prefatory Chapter

AS the experiences of fifty years are here condensed, comparative brevity may fairly be claimed, even if these jottings extend themselves over some two hundred pages. Doubtless it is possible to be both brief and tedious; and whether this undesired end has been attained, the reader alone can judge.

Knowing well the preface-skipping habits so common among us, I will include a few explanatory remarks in this chapter, and thus avoid the necessity for a preface.

So far from supposing the fishing public to feel any curiosity as to my personal experiences as such, my chief idea is that the thread of narrative interwoven in the following sketches may prove interesting as reminding many a reader of similar little adventures which may have happened to himself.

Being now in my "anecdotage," or near it, I feel tempted to recount various trivial incidents of childhood, but will not yield to the weakness

further than to confess that my earliest recollection of anything is that of my first fish-hook, and of the horny hand of the old gardener, as he bent the pin to make it, my own fingers being then much too small.

As the volumes which have appeared lately, dealing with the strictly practical side of the subject, are so many and so good, I have touched but lightly upon it, and little formal description of either fish or tackle is attempted. This omission may be considered the less remarkable as a little book on practical fishing (consisting of articles I have contributed to *The Boy's Own Paper*) will shortly be issued by the Editor of that serial.

With regard to the chapter on Izaak Walton, much as I admire the character of that venerable poet-angler, I should not have ventured on the well-worn theme had I not enjoyed the advantage of dwelling for twenty years in the very district he most frequented, and of fishing, with some success, the rivers made classic by his pen.

Again, with respect to fishing literature, I claim no special skill as critic; but, having for the last fourteen years been in the constant habit of making full use of the library of the Fly-fishers' Club, and also of other collections of fish-books, I have been enabled to form a fair acquaintance with a great variety of works on the subject, and am glad to be able to give others, less favoured by

opportunity, some hints as to the books best worth buying—or borrowing.

With regard to the accounts of various fishing resorts, and of the wild and romantic scenery by which many of these are surrounded, everything alluded to (with the most trivial exceptions) is sketched from personal experience.

It is this very circumstance that will explain, and partly excuse, a certain want of "up-to-dateness" which will be noticed by the bran-new fisher in many parts of the book. Pleading guilty to this charge, I can only urge, in stay of judgment, that the energy of youth cannot be united to the experience of age.

As to the tales at the fag end, they are added for the sake of those who like something *avowedly* fictitious even in a fishing book.

I have only to add an expression of the gratitude I feel to all those friends who have helped, either with advice or encouragement. Also to those veterans in fishing literature, Mr. Senior (Red Spinner) and Mr. C. H. Cook (John Bickerdyke), who have given such solid assistance, and especially to the former, whose generous introduction is, disclaimers notwithstanding, such a valuable certificate of a certain moderate degree of fitness on my part to undertake a work which had for years seemed to me too ambitious for my modest powers.

CHAPTER I

Why We Fish

DOUBTLESS we do "take our pleasures sadly" in this our well-named island of "Angle-land," and the ordinary angler, as seen in a Thames punt, or on the margin of the Lea, would seem to justify the Parisian's taunt. We might reply with a *tu quoque*, for are not the banks of Seine lined all day with patient gudgeon fishers?

Instead of depending on any such retort, let us rather answer—Such anglers are by no means typical of the race, although, from being so constantly on view, they have come to represent to the public the angling ideal.

How far they fall short of fairly doing so is clear enough; for an ideal angler should be an athlete, good at swimming, running, and jumping, either of which he may need any day in order to save his own life or that of a companion. He should also have sharp eyes and ears; and if he is to make the most of his opportunities, the

power of appreciating fully each natural beauty, as it unfolds itself before him in his spring rambles on the banks of running streams.

Some degree of love for the chase, in one form or another, seems the natural heritage of almost every member of the Anglo-Saxon race. Many there may be in whom it is but little developed, and who would repudiate with indignation the charge that after breakfast they are naturally impelled to "go out and kill something."

A faculty that has lain dormant for generations will, no doubt, become weakened, and a city man, born and bred, is necessarily ignorant of the streams and fields. Yet when a London merchant, like Punch's immortal "Mr. Briggs," decides to retire and lead a country life, he may often find that the hunter's instinct will awake and assert its vitality.

Who can fail to be charmed with Leech's sketch of that worthy man, so typical though fictitious, as he clasps the gigantic salmon to his manly bosom. Briggs, if not elegant, is a true sportsman, and sticks closely to his captive, through all its frantic rushes up and down the rock-strewn river; and when at last, wearied and panting, he claims the victory, there are some who will see in the dripping hero a touch of pathos, in spite of his ludicrous absurdity.

He has conquered a worthy antagonist in fair

fight, and on a field of battle to which he himself was wholly unaccustomed; and if his face and figure do not suggest the idea of a trained angler, yet we feel at once that his love for the sport is sincere, and if his dress looks incongruous enough, it is not of that he thinks, being evidently never meant, in any sense, for a tailor's dummy.

Angling has many charms, and not the least of them is that it takes us from our dusty city streets into the fresh air, among sweet country scenes, and gives us healthy exercise, both for body and for mind. That it is occasionally productive of something to supply the larder is but a small consideration, perhaps, to city folks, with shops all around. The mistress of a country house, expected to find varied and ample fare for many hungry visitors, will better know the value of a dish of dainty trout.

From an æsthetic point of view our sport has claims still stronger. Taking its votaries among the stern solitudes of nature, in silence and alone, what pursuit could favour more the growth of a poetic taste? Not that anglers write much verse—it is rather that they learn to love the things of which the poets write, whether in prose or rhyme; and sometimes, no doubt, the thoughts they thus absorb may come out in song.

Would Kingsley have produced *Prose Idylls* had he not been an angler to the core; and did not Walton's wanderings by the streams preserve from dryness all his learned works, while they gave to the *Complete Angler* its wondrous charm?

We can hardly glance along the shelves of any library without coming across many an angler's handiwork, though in it may sometimes be but little reference to his favourite pursuit. Are not Wilson's (Christopher North's) *Recreations*, Davy's *Salmonia* and Peard's *Year of Liberty* standard works, to say nothing of angling books by living authors?

Works on fishing alone would fill a large book-case, and a special library would be wanted to hold all the charming books (on all sorts of subjects) that owe their existence to an angler's brain. Old books on angling, too, seem always in demand, and fetch high prices.

As a means of gaining food, the art of angling is as ancient as the hills and streams; and of late years it has taken its place as a popular amusement among all sorts and conditions of Britons, from the Prince and Princess to the sweep and the cobbler; and the last mentioned is often among the best performers with the rod and line.

Master of his time, and pretty independent

with his customers, he will throw aside boots and proverbs ("*ne sutor ultra crepidam*" and all) and go a long way beyond his last, in chase of a chance salmon, in a sudden spate.

Perhaps the three learned professions contribute most disciples to our ranks; but the great army of anglers gains many a recruit from military circles; the Colonel and the Major being often as keen fishers as the parson, the doctor, or the lawyer. Perhaps the clerics have the best chance of all; and it is an occupation well suited to the cloth.

The conscientious scruples which so many clergy feel respecting hunting, or even shooting, are often absent when fishing is in question; and on many a fine May morning the parson who chances to be free from pressing parochial duties says, with St. Peter, "I go a fishing"; and does it, too, with results most advantageous to his more needy parishioners. What, indeed, can be more tempting to an invalid whose appetite is poor than a well-fried trout?

Often the Vicar will have access to the most strictly preserved waters; and usually he is not deficient in ability to make the most of his opportunities. Many an ancient parson, bordering on fourscore, could hold his own with the most active of us all, if we came to try conclusions on the Vicarage pool; for in no outdoor pursuit

is a man so little handicapped by age as in this.

The experience years bring with them nearly balances the advantage of youthful activity and strength; and though inclement weather may sometimes keep an old angler prisoner, while his sons brave the storm, he has at least store of sweet memories which are always with him, though tempered with that touch of sadness so inseparable from an old man's retrospect.

Even the remembrance of blank days and lost fish becomes amusing, rather than painful, as it recedes into the dim and distant past; and what angler will not delight to tell you how he was nearly wrecked on a jutting rock, when crossing a wind-swept loch, or all but drowned while fording a swollen stream?

When you call to mind that day you went in after a weeded fish (only to find that he had wriggled from your hook), and on returning to the bank beheld a bovine monster mounting guard above your clothes, the recollection lacks the irritating power the real occurrence had; and you can freely laugh at your sorry plight, and feel almost as much amused as any chance spectator might have been.

CHAPTER II

Mid April Showers

So widely is the taste diffused for this, the recreation of the contemplative man, that now its votaries may be numbered by hundreds of thousands, and even the most difficult and artistic form of the art, fly-fishing, is continually attracting fresh neophytes to learn its mysteries.

After all, sufficient skill to secure some small success in spring may quickly be acquired by any one who has the natural instinct of the hunter fairly well developed.

By "fly-fishing" is meant the art of using the artificial fly; and the fly-fisher has one distinct advantage at the outset. There is no wriggling worm, or other wretched living bait, to torture; and not only this, when the fish is hooked the hold is always in the gristle of the lip, in which no pain is felt, so that your fish is taken with the least possible suffering. Far less than when entangled for hours in the meshes of a cruel net.

Fly-fishers, therefore, may be, and often are, the most merciful of men; and we know that even the bait-fisher is sometimes most refined and amiable in character, for did not Izaak Walton win the love of all the best of his compatriots?

Just now it is the fisher with the fly we have in mind. A man of quiet and retiring mood will best appreciate the sport, but his senses should be keen and wide awake, for sudden unforeseen contingencies will oft occur. It must be presumed he has some occupation, for even fishing might weary a man who did nothing else. Perhaps the routine of a master at a school would go as well with an angler's life as any. I do not mean a drudge, but one whose duties are light and well defined.

Such a man, if past his prime for cricket and football, may with advantage use the rod and *spoil* the stream. If he has the good fortune to live near a grayling district, he can obtain some sport in open weather nearly all the year. In early spring he takes an hour or two at mid-day, and vigorously flogs the stream for early trout. The sport is easy then; and though but one trout in three is fit to keep, the fun is often fast and lively.

As April showers come on the sport improves, and as the evenings lengthen he will often find his basket heavy. At Easter or Whitsuntide he

will perhaps take a turn on waters more remote, where fish are less accustomed to the wiles of man. Such a trip is neither troublesome nor costly; and if he wields the brush or even owns a kodak, he is sure of some resource if fish are dour or scarce.

Let us follow in his footsteps for a day. He makes a start betimes, for the best pools are all far up the glen. The air in early May is fresh and keen, and on the further hills the snow still glistens in the morning sun. All this is in his favour, for a tramp of half a dozen miles of moor and heather is no joke on sultry days. The creel, of which lunch is now the chief contents, feels light as air, and the little rod a baby's plaything.

Wading boots or stockings, useful as they often are, would not be worth their carriage here, so he steps out manfully all unencumbered, and completes his uphill walk with all the day before him. And what a day it is! Those who seldom get beyond the smell of London till the heats of August drive them out, can know but little of the glorious freshness of the moors in spring or early summer. All the air seems charged with health and vigour; and although song birds, as we climb, seem scarcer, the whaup and ousel still are our companions.

As our friend draws near the pool that he knows of old it is best to start with, some rings appear

upon its shining surface. Too old a hand to hurry, he yet prepares without delay; and soon, as if by magic, from his little ten-foot rod shoots out a slender line, and a pair of flies, with deadly pointed tails, have joined their living prototypes in the giddy dance upon that swirling pool.

As they touch the surface comes a double splash, and one trout at least has felt the steel. "A small fish," thinks our friend, and tries to jerk him out, and not disturb the rest, but soon repents; for a larger fish had seized the other fly, and hooked himself. Snap goes the little greenheart rod, and half the top runs down the line, so clean the fracture! Had the trout been really large, the line would now have suffered; but these mountain fish are seldom big, and the two would not have weighed a pound.

A little gentle management, and both are safely stranded on the sloping shore. Then taking from his fly-book some wax-end, and cutting in each broken piece of top an even splice, our angler mends his tackle easily enough, and starts again upon a higher pool, from which an ousel flits, to show his snowy waistcoat and flirt his tail a little farther on.

Noting here and there a nest, and seeing perhaps a pair of grouse on family affairs intent, our angler makes his way still higher up the shoulders of the everlasting hills, until the burn

becomes too small for fly, and his heavy creel begins to gall his back.

Rest is sweet, and on the heather he will careless cast his weary limbs and eat his frugal lunch, and count his spoil. And they take some counting. It is by the dozen these little mountain trout are reckoned, half a gross being perhaps a fair day's sport.

After lunch the angler who is wise will in bright weather take a quiet rest, and if a smoker puff the fragrant weed.

It is when the sun declining nearly hides behind the shoulders of the higher hills that sport begins again. On his homeward way our hero may pick up more little victims, if the river should be full and rough; but on a smooth and shallow stream the downward journey is a poor affair; the sharp-eyed little beauties spy you from afar, lying as they do with heads towards you. It is only in the deeper turns and twists, or where boulders break the stream into a dozen eddies, that fish will seize your fly, and send that thrill from rod top up to shoulder which only anglers know.

Just as the sun is setting, perhaps the fisher reaches that point (too near the village) at which the fishing ceases to be good, except in spates; but as the walk is open, and no streets will have to be paraded, the little rod can still be carried as it stands, although a prudent man removes his

flies, unless he likes the notion of playing, perhaps a cat, or perhaps a wondering fowl, foul-hooked upon them. For that *has* happened.

After a hearty meal, such as few but sportsmen can digest, the fisher puts his lines out to dry, sorts his flies, and sees that all is ready for the morning sun, and then perchance a village expert will appear, with local flies with which to tempt the stranger. Also much advice, often good, though to be taken with a grain of salt, will pass. If, as may often happen, you have fish to spare, he will know which of the poor around have best claim to such addition to their scanty meals.

In olden times the local men would catch their fish with coarse and heavy tackle that would shock the modern sportsman, and send a trout of these times back to sulk for hours at such an insult. Now the village fisher, except in most remote localities, possesses flies and lines almost as delicate as those we use ourselves, and with his local knowledge is often still ahead.

Although the next day may be quite different in its details, it need not be described, the charm is much the same; and if bad weather sometimes keep the angler idle, as it will the cricketers and others, at the first glint of sunshine he is out again, not fearing that his sport is spoilt, unless the rain has been of most unusual violence.

I have described an angler's solitary day, because it is a sport that can be thus enjoyed, in which it holds advantage; but with a friend of like enthusiasm it is better far, and in such a case it loses its one drawback, and no sport can better it.

Holidays over, work begins; but evenings now are long indeed, and as May advances how the alder-fly (of which Kingsley wrote so charming a prose poem) swarms upon the overlapping boughs and sedges, and tumbles in the stream! It is now that sometimes even anglers are contented, and cry hold! At least I hear so; but to him whose evenings only are his own, repletion seldom comes. From five o'clock to eight in these May evenings sport is at its best and man's heart is light, and he feels, although he seems to heed it not, the wondrous beauty of the landscape decked with freshest green and "looks through Nature up to Nature's God."

All the groves that line the river's bank are vocal; for the birds love running water, and in sandy shallows may be seen dipping and paddling. Not alone the ousels and the wagtails; all the birds haunt moist and shady places, when the heat grows strong.

Just as May has gone comes the belated May-fly, sometimes even waiting till mid-June before he will appear in numbers. What a feast he

makes for birds and fishes! How the swallows skim the very surface of the sun-lit shallows, and snatch the dainty morsels as they flutter feebly forth, escaping from the jaws of hungry fishes only to exchange a Scylla for Charybdis! Here our title warns us to conclude. "Spring" has gone and summer is upon us.

CHAPTER III

The May-Fly

"THE FLY is up!" So runs the telegram the Vicar has received while seated at his breakfast. In half an hour the trap is ready, fishing things are in, and off the parson goes, while wife and daughters watch him from the porch.

"'Tis very strange," says old Mrs. Lidless as he passes her cottage, "but now our Vicar's gone in just the same mad haste that the doctor and the lawyer seemed to feel as they went off together! And I *know* they all had telegrams! What can it be? I hope the undertaker won't go next."

Never mind, old lady, be content; you will guess when pleasantly reminded by a brace of handsome trout.

In early June the anglers all go mad, like hares in March. Lawyers forsake their clients, doctors their patients, and the parson even leaves his flock till Sunday, while he plies that calling which his predecessors left of old. When the

trio reach the river-side, they find another angler waiting to begin.

To this smooth water and these giant trout he is perhaps unaccustomed. So the parson, whose perpetual leave and frequent leisure give him wondrous skill, takes our friend in hand while the other pair walk off together farther up the stream.

Stolid, but watchful, with a landing-net of abnormal dimensions on his shoulder, stands the keeper.

Orders for fishing are produced, and as they start he follows, silent. Being questioned, he admits the fly *is* on, and "mortial powerful," but, "lor," he says, "they fish won't take it yet."

At that very moment, as they watch the gorgeous insects fluttering on the stream, up comes a trout and gives the man the lie.

"What a splendid fish!" bursts out our novice. "A pretty trout," replies the cleric, "but undersized, at least in May-fly time."

The eager angler had already cast his fly within the ring just made, and with a rush and flounce the trout had gobbled it. The fight was furious, for the lively fish seemed a trained acrobat, and flashed and leapt and dived and leapt again, till his captor trembled for the tackle! There was no occasion. May-fly tackle is in no danger from

the antics of a trout like that. Coolly Velveteens, with a face as long as ever, scoops out the still unconquered beauty, and as coolly frees her from the hook, and—puts her back again!

Our friend is wisely silent. Had he spoken then, the parson had been shocked. After a moment, gulping down the word that nearly passed his lips, he asked, with forced coolness, "What the—D—ickens that was for?"

The keeper held his peace, as usual, but the other said, "I fear the man is right. Fifteen inches is the limit now."

The pool seemed much disturbed; but as the three were moving on, quite suddenly the rise began in earnest.

From behind each waving weed the bulky forms of ancient trout appear, and boldly dash at every May-fly as it drifts along.

The surface of the pool is all in waves, as giant fish (which grub along the bottom in the spring) seem to forget their caution and pursue their prey without regarding man.

Once more the artificial flies are on the surface, and again the novice has a fish; but this time it *is* a fish indeed, and at last the stolid face of that old keeper shows a light. Not that he smiles or speaks. His frown is less severe; and as he watches for the time to use his net, one eye is seen to twinkle.

Alas! this wild excess of joy is premature. The frantic plunges of the heavy fish have torn the slight hold which the hook had taken, and back the line comes in our hero's face!

Meanwhile the parson is not idle. A goodly fish is trying all it knows to wind his line around a bunch of weeds, or hang it on a snag. Vain are all its struggles, vain its leaps; for as it falls across the line (as doubtless it intended), the parson dips his rod, and the fish's ruse is fruitless.

"Don't hurry, John," he says; "the hold is good. Your help is wanted yonder."

And so it was, for the other man had once again formed an attachment with a lovely fish, and didn't mean to be again divorced. Calmly the keeper scoops her out, and saying "Sizable" returns to help his other master.

By this time the heavy fish was quite exhausted, and floating on his golden side showed all his grand proportions. Carefully the keeper stoops and very gently puts the net beneath that four-pound trout, and with a sigh that comes as near a chuckle as he ever gets, observes "A tidy fish."

The flies still swarm, and many a splashing rise is heard and seen, but very few are felt, for the trout are rising "short," and all the afternoon there are but three or four who make

mistakes and take the fly they only meant to play with.

But three brace of trout like these ought to satisfy the keenest angler, and the parson never wishes to distress the river, though he gladly carries home his share of trout to line the larder and astonish his curious neighbour, Mrs. Lidless.

The lawyer and the doctor, both old hands, have done still better, bringing home four brace, the best a six-pound cannibal ("better out than in"), besides returning a lot of "little two-pound fish," as they are pleased to call them. So ends that May-fly day. But better days are coming, for now and then the fish take really well; and indeed the legend runs that on one day in June, after the tenth five-pounder had been landed, the keeper fairly smiled.

Till quite mid-June the rise will often linger, and all the "duffers' fortnight" is a sort of festival, to keep which all duties, not of strict necessity, are ruthlessly postponed.

CHAPTER IV

In Summer Evenings

AFTER the May-fly carnival the trout observe a fast, and are hard to tempt even with daintiest morsels of fur and feather; and most anglers take a rest, unless they have to work still harder than of old to overtake arrears.

In about a week the fish begin to find their appetites again, and now the skilful angler, with delicate tackle and tiny flies, will succeed once more. But such success is only given to the man who has at least some little knowledge of the "dry-fly" system.

To explain this method fully is beyond our scope; but a few words will describe it perhaps as far as the outer world will care to understand it.

As its name implies, the fly presented to the fish is kept from getting water-logged, and therefore floats, or should float, with cocked wings, just as any man may see a natural insect drifting down the stream. Until lately the fly had to be

kept dry by continual flicking — six false casts to one in earnest. Now most anglers anoint their flies with vaseline or paraffin, and save some labour. Much more is required than merely keeping flies floating, if success is to be secured. The fly must alight gently just above the feeding fish, and must not drag.

Many dry-fly men make a rule of never casting at random, and wait always for a rise; but this is a course which involves sometimes inaction nearly all day, and even at the time of year we now have come to such long inaction is somewhat wearisome. Perhaps it is better to try every fish that hovers near the surface, or even, on occasion, to cast in certain spots on the chance, though but slender, of tempting trout from under weeds or banks. In any case in sultry weather the angler who is wise will save his strength for evening. Often after a long day of failure will the last hour of daylight fill his basket.

Those old trout which have so carefully inspected and contemptuously refused the choicest little olives and most delicate hare's-ears in his fly case, will now begin gently to suck in the sedges as they flit about the growths on the margin of the pools. The light is failing, and you will find it not an easy task to drop your sedge just on the spot where that little ring appeared a moment, looking like a minnow's rise.

But it is worth the trouble. The dimple is repeated, and a gentle turn given to your wrist causes a mighty plunge and fierce and desperate resistance.

If you have thought to put on stout tackle for this evening work, the trout, in spite of all, is soon a captive, and there is yet time to secure his brother, and make up a basket ere the light has gone. It is not always that there is an evening rise, alas! But then there are days, even in full summer, when fish will feed in sunshine; and the little olive dun or Wickham, tied on finest tackle and deftly used, will bring many a goodly trout to grief. And if not, for a fairly lazy man it is hard to find a nicer occupation than to wander round at pleasure under the willows and beside the mill, watching the sulky trout and lively minnows, while the voles run timidly from one cover to another on the grassy bank.

If you are very still, these graceful little creatures will forget your presence, or seem to do so, as they crop the tender shoots of the young grass, or swim with a leaf of willow to help may be to line their nests. If your eyes are sharp, you may descry a mole appearing from a sandy little mound and buried again in a moment; but this sight is rarer. On many streams the azure flash of halcyon is quite a common vision. All the day the swallows skim and dip, and in the meadows

round the peewits flap their heavy piebald wings and constantly emit their petulant and peevish cry well rendered in their name.

The larks are seldom silent, and the rooks as seldom absent; and an occasional seagull lightly floats about, or joins the rooks, grub-hunting at the plough-tail. A heron is a rarer visitant, except in early morning, when he takes his toll of minnows or of trout, if he can get them, from off the sandy shallows. Thus, even if the angler has no human comrades, one can hardly say that he is "solitary" while such hosts of interesting creatures keep him company.

As evening shadows deepen the moths come out, pursued by bats, which sometimes take your fly and cause embarrassment. Be careful how you handle them, for even the tiny "flittermouse" has his teeth, and the larger bat can bite you pretty sharply. Owls flit silent by, and all nature tells you it is time for slumber. On these southern rivers anglers do not toil all night like the Scotch fishers, of whom more anon. As July comes in, the angler may relax something of his keenness, knowing that now the long vacation is at hand and he can fly to Scottish lochs and streams and feel the weeks are all his own till autumn.

CHAPTER V

Among the Falling Leaves

SOOTHING, with a touch of sadness, is the afternoon of a genial autumn day. The air has lost the crispness which distinguished it in early morning, and the mellow warmth gives no hint of the touch of frost which comes with sunset. The only thing that tends to try the temper of the patient angler is the shower of leaves that now and then the light breeze scatters on the stream.

These, indeed, will aggravate him sorely if he casts a fly; but most autumn anglers seek their sport down in the depths, and it is only the grayling and the salmon that are whipped and cast for now.

To the bottom fishers floating leaves give little inconvenience, and the breeze which ruffles all the surface is a welcome friend to those who fish for pike or perch, while the gentle "roacher" need only seek a sheltered swim, where he can clearly see the tiny tip of his well-balanced float.

Every sort of fish is now in season except the

trout, which has just turned its thoughts towards the domestic arrangements of the coming winter, and is therefore left in peace by anglers worthy of the name, even in Scotland where no law protects it.

What a perfect picture is a perch in late October! How his golden black-barred sides shine with lustre, contrasting so finely with the bright vermilion fins. As he nears the net, with what defiant action is that grand back-fin erected!

Even a loggerheaded chub looks handsome now, and roach are fat as pigs and bright as silver.

The broad bream becomes less slimy, but he does not feed so well as in the early autumn or late summer, and we seldom see him now. His friend the barbel, always an imposing-looking fish, becomes almost handsome as his sides grow golden, and his back a deeper bronze.

In one thing the autumn days are sadly lacking, for the birds are dumb. Not literally mute, for short bursts of song surprise us now and then, more perhaps in autumn than in the heats of August; but as many of our song birds have already fled the coming winter, it is to the robin that we mainly owe our music. To all this the anglers form an audience. How the birds would miss us if, at some far-distant day, the anti-sport fanatics pass a law forbidding any such "cruel" amusements. Perhaps the robin does not really

sing to us, but to his mate alone, yet it is a pleasing delusion to believe so; and in the autumn bird love-calls are surely out of date.

It is usual to assert that bottom fishers are more contemplative even than the votaries of fly, and perhaps it is so; yet as one throws the light line in almost careless fashion for the gamesome grayling, so capricious in their ways, there is ample opportunity for thought and for observing Nature in her innermost recesses. Certainly the man who puts a live bait in a pool, and waits with patience till a pike or perch absorbs it, must have often too much time to spare, and could learn a language in a single season if he only put a grammar in his creel. I fancy Walton must have carefully composed, and even perhaps actually written, much of his admirable prose while waiting "under honeysuckle hedges" and by river banks for perch or pike to take his shining bait.

With the angler for the nibbling roach conditions are quite different. He may listen to the birds if he will; but to watch them is impossible, if he means to fill his creel, for his usual way of fishing demands unwinking watchfulness. He sits quietly in one spot holding his long cane rod steadily over the tip of his light quill float, and the moment the slightest dip occurs he must nick his fish—that is, if he can.

Other methods there are which demand less

unremitting care, and these, under special conditions, are as good or even better. For instance, in this very autumn season, if the heavy rains have swollen and coloured the river, it is actually better to use comparatively heavy tackle and let a lobworm lie upon the bottom while you hold the rod and feel for bites. This "legering" system is far less trying to the eyes and nerves than the tight-line plan, and as you can use running tackle with it you have the great advantage of the chance of killing heavy chub or barbel, which nearly always break away from the tight-line angler.

Then you may even rest your rod upon a forked stick, and fold your arms and think philosophy, and haply go to sleep, and find, on waking, that your rod is in the water, your line broken, and your fish, or rather *a* fish, gone!

To my taste spinning for perch or pike is, next to fly-fishing, the best sport for autumn. When the weather is chilly the exercise is just enough to keep you warm, and the skill required to cast your bait well out and work it safely home gives a flavour to the sport, even if fish are wanting.

When a good perch strikes the fun is capital, for such a fish will run your line out and fight bravely to the last, and must never be considered caught till in the net. With jack (or with chub, which sometimes run at a minnow, though fish

is not its proper food) it is different. A mighty rush there is, and you must yield or break; but after that, in most cases (not in all), the great fish comes in tamely, and is your own with scarce another struggle.

CHAPTER VI

Method and Methods

SKILL in throwing the fly, necessary as it is up to a certain point, is no more the whole of the fly-fisher's art than is the proper management of his sword the whole duty of a soldier.

This part of your lesson can be learnt, as far as is at first necessary, on a lawn, especially if a veteran will give you half a dozen lessons. But in case this plan, which is much the best, is impracticable, I advise that you take a greenheart rod of ten feet in length, with a winch of forty yards of tapered and dressed line. Be careful that the winch is of a suitable weight. Some of the vulcanite or other light winches do not answer well, because they spoil the balance of the rod; therefore, never buy a winch without seeing that it suits your rod. This you can only ascertain properly by trying it, after running some line through the rings.

In your first attempts at casting, do not attach any fly to your line, but fix a *tiny* bit of white rag or leather, of about the size of a large fly, instead.

This you will find easy to see when it alights, and it will also be more comfortable in your friend's eye when you hit him with it. Try to learn first the simple overhead cast, and begin with a line about twice the length of your rod; one much shorter than that is harder to cast.

Remember that the line must have time to extend itself behind you before you urge it forward, or it will crack like a whip, and if a fly were on it would be broken off. After a few hours' practice, you will find it easy to put eight or ten yards with some degree of accuracy in a straight line on the lawn, and you can then begin to learn the more difficult sorts of casting—the horizontal cast, either from right or left, and the "Spey" cast, so called from its frequent necessity on that river, owing to steep banks rising behind the angler.

To achieve this, you have to acquire the knack of sending your line nearly straight upwards, instead of behind you, in the backward action, preliminary to the actual cast. With some elementary idea of these three methods you are fairly ready for the fray; but before expecting success on a well-fished stream you will have very much to learn which can best be acquired by actual practice.

Let us suppose you have a rod (not a split cane at first) and tackle which some experienced friend has procured for you. Do not be above taking his advice in everything, even to the matter of dress.

On most rivers, I fancy, a heather-mixture suit, with a cap of similar colour, is the best equipment, with knickerbockers and stout boots, using waders only when the advantage of doing so is quite clear. For instance, when a stream is heavily bushed on both sides, or when you are fishing a broad and shallow river.

It is quite true that on some streams in which wading is not thus rendered almost necessary it has its advantages, for if you wade very cautiously upstream you are less conspicuous, and perhaps less likely to disturb the trout immediately above you, than if you were on an open bank.

To set against this is the fact that you are spoiling any sport which might have been enjoyed by an angler coming after you, and you are sometimes less able to cope with a big fish if it runs down directly at you. It will occasionally be found difficult to prevent it from swimming between your legs, and thus breaking away. The risk of injury to health from wading has also to be thought of, and in cold weather it may be considerable.

You will find it well to put your tackle together, and even to attach your fly (provided you know what is on the water), before approaching the river; and if not very inconvenient, it is best to start fishing at the lowest point possible, and always work upwards.

Although it is useless to fly-fish, as a rule, very early in the morning (that is, at dawn or earlier, like a bream fisher), you will find in real summer weather that the trout begin to rise, (and very often leave off again) long before most anglers can persuade themselves to do so. I do not mean that the rise for the day is over by ten o'clock, but that the trout have by that time taken their breakfasts, and often leave off feeding for awhile.

They soon come on again, and usually continue till one or two o'clock, unless the weather is very hot; but after this there is little rise till quite late in the afternoon. All these rules are subject to frequent variations, depending on weather, etc.; but an angler who makes it his custom to begin by six or seven o'clock, and to leave off for two or three hours in the early afternoon, will generally have the best basket.

Supposing, then, you have reached the bank of a fair trout stream at about seven on a May morning. If you are in Devon, put on a blue dun as end fly, and a red palmer as the dropper. If the stream is smooth, look carefully for a rise, and then, taking your rod in the right hand and the fly in your left, and having about seven or eight yards of line out, endeavour to throw your flies lightly just above the rise, taking care to approach from a point ten yards or so lower down the stream, and in a crouching position, and taking advantage

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also of any cover that the bank may afford, if it is only a bunch of nettles or a fine thistle.

As you can at present only throw with the right hand, you will find it convenient to be on the left-hand side of the stream (looking upwards), so that you can conveniently throw close in towards the bank a few yards above you. It is there that you are likely to find the best fish, and, as Kingsley would tell you, "not in skipjack broad."

Supposing by any strange chance you should induce some silly trout to take your fly, a quick yet gentle jerk should be given with the wrist to fix the hook. Then shorten line as quickly as possible, unless your fish is large (which is most improbable), and see that there is no slack line, or the hook may drop out. If the fish tries to run into weeds, keep its head up so that it cannot burrow, and by the same means prevent it from taking your line round a boulder.

If your fish is of a fair size, say a quarter of a pound, which is good for Devon, use your landing-net, not to avoid breakage, but the risk of the hold giving way. Of course the little two-ounce fish may be swung out promptly, and should be returned, though in Devon this is not often done, I fear.

If you find that your skill will not avail to tempt any fish from the smooth glides in which the best trout generally lie, you must even be content to

copy the natives, and fish the "stickles," or rough runs, and it will then be sometimes necessary to fish down. You will find this easy work, but the proportion of fish risen and missed, or pricked and lost, is very great.

Still, by the end of the day, even allowing you two hours' rest for lunch, there ought to be nearly a couple of dozen decent trout in your basket, if the day is a good one, especially if you stay till just after sunset, and use a coachman or other white-winged fly for the last few minutes.

Your back will not be greatly burdened by your fish, for they will not average quite a quarter of a pound; and your walk home is likely to be pleasant enough, lighted may be with innumerable glow-worms on the grass, to correspond with the stars above you. And if you have but a mile or so to walk to reach your inn, the fatigue induced by such a day will be no more than enough to prepare you to consume a capital Devonshire dinner in the evening.

CHAPTER VII

Within a Day from London Town

SOME men there are to whom all Saturdays are free, and these, of course, have some advantage in a whole day's leisure. For them more distant waters, such as Test and Itchen, are happy hunting grounds, and a good long day may be enjoyed by early risers. One great advantage is their chance for grayling, for they thus secure some winter fishing, when the trout are busy spawning.

In both Test and Itchen sport goes on from April to December, and a man can well afford to pay a heavy fee to spend so many Saturdays with such variety of fish and fishing.

Of course, these rivers are most carefully looked after, and the price demanded for each rod on Itchen, Test, or Anton, is perhaps more than on the Wandle, while the journey is a source of much additional expense and trouble. Yet the ardent angler, if his means and time permit, will gladly take a rod on any length that has a good

repute; and perhaps of all fly-fishers there are none that can compare for skill and perseverance with a Hampshire man.

Hampshire is the home of English trout, and the natives of this country will ever rank as leaders in the sport, and the Stockbridge and Houghton Clubs will always be remembered, not alone for the unrivalled skill its members there acquired, but for the literature it has produced through Francis, Penn, and Halford.

For the man who is contented with the class of fishing christened "coarse," the neighbourhood of London will afford an ample choice of sport. If his means and time are scanty, he must be contented with such fish as Tottenham or Hendon afford, and these, though shy, are not by any means all small.

A visit in the spawning time to the Ferry-boat fishery will convince the most sceptical that big fish are there. To catch them is quite another matter; yet the skilful angler, if well used to the water, does now and then secure some splendid bream, such as those you may see in hot weather basking in the pool below the bridge.

The stranger, however skilful, is not likely to do more than make a fair basket of small roach; and for even moderate success, conditions must be favourable. A good many small jack are often showing, and sometimes the little dace rise well,

with now and then a tidy chub; and best of all, on quite red-letter days, a handsome trout!

Many small trout have been caught from this fishery during the last few years, and this is the result of judicious stocking. The drawback may be stated in one word—"pike." These will always keep the trout from becoming numerous.

At very little additional cost the angler may visit some of the more distant fisheries on the Lea, such as Ponder's End, Waltham, or Broxbourne. The cost of a day ticket is the same at each of these stations, and certainly a shilling does not seem exorbitant for a day on preserved waters, even if fish are shy! On the ferry-boat an evening was to be had for half-price, but this is not the case elsewhere.

All along the Lea, an angler who reveres his "Father Walton" will find plenty of mementoes to interest him. From Tottenham Cross (one of those put up to commemorate the halting of the bearers of the body of Queen Eleanor) right down to Ware is connected with his memory. Of all the stations accessible to the public I fancy Broxbourne is now the best, though in former years I have had very good sport among the roach and chub, both with fly and bait, on many stations much nearer town; sometimes, indeed, doing very well even in Tottenham itself. All round London there is more or less fishing to be had.

I forbear to particularise the spots on Thames which are thought to yield best sport, because they are both over-fished and constantly described in the columns of our sporting papers.

During the summer the traffic is so great on the lower Thames that the patient angler has but a poor time of it, and is apt to wish himself on some spot on Lea or Colne, where the launches cease from rushing and the water is at rest. There are backwaters, however, by Hampton and near Windsor, where I can remember some quiet hours in a boat, with now and then good sport as well. Near Sunbury the fly-fisher may sometimes have fair sport; but nearly all the trout he gets will have to be returned, for the limit is two pounds.

The Mole, if followed some miles from its junction with the Thames by Hampton Court, will yield fair fishing, chiefly for bream and chub. It contains many good trout in its higher reaches, but is there very strictly preserved. The water is thick, which to my mind renders the river less interesting.

The Colne, which flows in on the opposite bank, is quite a contrast. Coming through the Buckingham chalk, it flows in a clear full stream, sometimes slow and deep, and then rushing over gravelly shallows till it approaches its junction with the Thames, near to which it is more canal-like and not quite so clear. All through its course it contains fish of various kinds; trout

and dace delighting in its shallows, and roach and chub haunting its slower reaches and deeper pools, in which also the pike find harbour. These are numerous, but not often large. The roach and dace are very fine in its lower waters, while good trout are often taken by spinning in suitable localities.

To the fly-fisher the dace give better sport than the trout; these latter seldom rising well, though numbers of them may be seen between Uxbridge and West Drayton, and, indeed, are to be found, more or less, all along the river. On some portions of the water only fly is allowed, and here a few good trout are taken with that lure, but it is uncertain work.

A Club has been formed at West Drayton to fish "Godfrey's" water, and its members have very good sport sometimes, both with jack and roach. Many fine dace are also taken with the fly, and now and then a good trout. The roach are particularly large (as they were in Godfrey's time), of which I have before me in a case ocular proof—nearly two pounds he was, and taken on single hair.

Among London lakes the Kingsbury reservoir at Hendon reigns pre-eminent for size, and is sometimes well worth fishing, especially if a man likes to fish with little trouble. The water is so thick sometimes that the angler need take no precau-

tions to keep out of sight, and may use fairly strong tackle. The lake contains jack, which feed voraciously at times, and then for many hours will hardly touch a bait.

The other inhabitants of the lake are bream, perch, tench, and roach; some of the first are fine fish, while the perch and roach run small. Young bream (bream flats they call them) are taken in great numbers near the edges, and patient anglers sometimes get the big fish by legering near the middle.

Next in size to this sheet of water is Dagenham breach, which was formed many years ago by an overflow of the Thames near Barking. The water here is even less pure than at Hendon, and the banks are flat and muddy, so that it is not so attractive a place for the lover of the picturesque as the Kingsbury reservoir. Yet many anglers frequent it from the East End of London, and large bags of evil-smelling bream are sometimes made.

In the ornamental water in Wimbledon Park some fair fishing is to be had for a small annual fee, and here the surroundings are pretty, and the water fairly clear. Pike, perch, carp, and bream are the best fish, and there are lots of roach, and some dace and chub. Barbel have also been introduced, but they seldom thrive in still water. A little further afield are the small lakes at Elstree, beyond Hendon, and at Ruislip, near Pinner.

The Medway, near Tonbridge, may be considered within reach for a day's fishing from town; and here the skilled angler will sometimes have really good sport among the bream and roach, if he can find a friendly native to give him a few hints. Without this he may often fail, as the ways of Medway fish are peculiar, and the water (like their tricks) is dark.

Many Londoners travel as far as the Arun, near Arundel, and bring home good bags of bream sometimes; and it is quite possible to make of the Norfolk broads London lakes; indeed, I have done so, but it involves very early starts and late returns, and makes a toil of a pleasure, so we will not go further afield in our sketch of "London Fisheries."

CHAPTER VIII

On Houghton Water

ALTHOUGH it is rather startling to be awakened by the first strokes of a water-mill, instead of an alarum, the noise, when you begin to recognise it as a familiar friend, is rather soothing than otherwise; and had I slept many more nights in the old mill-house at Houghton, perhaps the sound of the wheel might merely have served as a pleasant reminder that there was no train to catch.

Most men on the first morning of their sojourn become suddenly virtuous, as far as early rising is concerned, and find themselves, long before breakfast is ready, strolling up or down the river, with an eye for "rises."

The downward excursion could be only for a few yards, as the water belonging to the Houghton Club extended but a short distance in that direction, and its main point of interest was the mill-tail and pool. In these were lots of good grayling and a few trout, and the very few "duffers" the club

contained are rumoured to have taken most of their fish from these troubled waters. My friend did not suggest that I should try this spot; and this was, I suppose, a compliment, though ill deserved and unwished for.

It was near here a celebrated North-Country grayling fisher took his record bag of giant grayling with worm, by special permission.

It was not till after a leisurely breakfast and a quiet walk of a quarter of a mile up the river that any fishing was so much as thought of. Nor would a fly have been cast perhaps till afternoon had it not chanced to be an early-rising day, so that feeding fish were soon visible, and could be attacked in true orthodox fashion. From the first to which I was formally introduced I failed to get a rise. Indeed, I "put him down"—so much was he scandalized at my style of casting. Perhaps the next had received a less finished education, for he took my delusive snare most sweetly, and after some exciting play was fairly under control and nearly in the net, when the hold gave, and he was free!

After this I tried to admire the scenery for awhile, and watch my companion, who, contrary to his usual habits, was actually fishing in a steady and persistent manner, and curiously enough without much ultimate success, though I saw him hook three good trout in a few minutes.

This was on a wide shallow, and the fish were rising all around and often taking, when properly covered. Yet only one fish came to bank all day, and that fell to my companion's rod, and weighed about a pound and a half; not large for this grand water. We had some undersized fish also which were not counted. I remember that towards evening we met the late Mr. Marryat, and afterwards "The Major," and the last had taken some nice grayling, which he showed us; but I saw no other trout.

Next day was very sunny, and we fished but little; and once more I had to be content to return my fish, for all were small. The show of fish in the bright sunshine was most tantalizing. All along the river, by sedgy deep, bright rapid or spreading shallow, trout, and big trout, were lying plainly visible, but not in rising mood; and to throw over them, even when they seemed to touch the surface, is not orthodox.

In other circumstances I am not by any means a purist, but in these I naturally conformed to the very virtuous sentiments expressed by my respected host as to the injury done to trout streams by those reckless men who will insist on casting over sulky fish and making them still sulkier.

The worst of it is that I fear my host is partly right; and that the best way for a man always on the spot to secure a good proportion of big fish in a

season is to cast only over rises. It is far otherwise with a visitor. Yet it is only right that he should conform to the same rule, and take his chance.

In the Hampshire fisheries comfort reigns supreme; and in the wettest weather (of which, indeed, we had a little) we could keep dry clothes by means of the charming little huts dotted about at many a noted spot upon the banks. I don't remember one at the famed "leg of mutton swim," where such heavy grayling have often been secured by many a noted angler, from "Red Spinner" downwards.

Trying this corner, I kept rising dace, and, perhaps unwisely, soon abandoned it. Big roach are also taken sometimes here, and pike, alas! are only too abundant, though well looked after, both with wire and bait. It is seldom they are left to reach a heavy weight, and while very small they do comparatively little harm. Big trout are far worse than little jack. When a trout outgrows his proper four lb. weight he soon becomes a cannibal, and if such fish were taken out no river would be equal to the crystal Test.

CHAPTER IX

In East Anglia

MARKED, indeed, is the contrast between a day on a mountain trout-stream and a morning devoted to the slimy bream. Surroundings and methods, tackle and temper, will all be of a different description, the one virtue of patience (thought by some ignorant outsiders to be the angler's only good quality) being required in both branches of the art.

Without disguising my strong preference for the lively trout, let me try to indicate the few points in which the bream-fisher has the advantage. He may enjoy his sport within a very short distance of some popular seaside resort, such as Lowestoft, Yarmouth, or Cromer. Then he must be an early riser, for the bream breakfasts at dawn, and this ensures the additional advantage of having the whole day before him when his sport is over. Of course he will be too sleepy to do anything, which is just the sort of mood required for thoroughly enjoying a sojourn by the sea.

The best way to secure some sport is to engage a boatman at some angling resort close to the river or broad, and to come down over-night and sleep at the inn, having first seen your "swim" properly baited. About the middle of the night, as it seems to you, a terrific knocking makes you jump out of bed and wonder where the fire has broken out; and then you remember (and regret) your order to be called at 3 a.m. Sulkily you dress, and look out gloomily at the fading stars, wishing at first that it were raining and you might get into bed again; but by the time you meet your companion in the chilly morning air all bad temper has vanished, and you are ready to greet him in the cordial manner natural to the angler even in early morning.

The broad-beamed boat is ready, and the boatman has been waiting half an hour, as he will remind you later on if sport should be indifferent. By the time the tackle, etc., have been settled in the boat and you are under way, the light will be just enough to show you what a different country it is from any that the trout frequent.

All the fields seem lower in their levels than the rivers and canals; and instead of trees are windmills everywhere. These are not for grinding anything, but to pump the water up from the dykes around into the river above.

This topsy-turvy arrangement is rendered

necessary, of course, by the levels of field and river being reversed, a state of things originating in the fact that most of the land has, in ancient times, been reclaimed from sea or marsh.

Arrived at the chosen spot, the boat is quietly fastened to the reeds, or to a pair of rypecks which had been fixed in readiness overnight, and you lose no time in putting before the bream their tempting breakfast. The lob-worms we are using rest on the bottom, and at first our floats remain motionless, and our enthusiasm begins to cool. A blank seems only too probable, and we are reduced to admiring the scenery (which indeed has its own peculiar charm as dawn begins to light it up with misty brightness), when suddenly a float begins to move. First it shifts from its upright position and lies flat, a certain sign of bream, and then slowly moves away.

At this point our boatman, whose float is the one affected, snatches up his rod and hauls in unceremoniously a broad-sided, wobbling fish, then rebaits and flops in his line once more without a word. By this time we both have fish on; and as our tackle is not the whipcord which the boatman uses, some care and skill is necessary to avoid disaster. Soon both bream are duly netted, and five minutes' work has resulted in six pounds of fish on board.

This goes on for half an hour, all doing

equally well, and then a change begins, for the light waxes strong and the bream get shy of the boatman's whipcord, and all the best fish, including some of four pounds or so, are taken by the fine tackle.

By the time the sun is fairly up we are thoroughly tired of playing these big bream. We are also covered with slime from hand to elbow, and can well understand the use of those aprons we had almost refused to wear. As little roach now began to take the place of bream we pack up and count the spoil, which almost cover the bottom of the boat.

Going home a different way we cross the sunlit, sparkling broad, and the scene is almost lively, as the moor-fowl scuttle away at our approach, and here and there the white sail of a yacht shows in the distance, or a grimy wherry, shaving us closely in its course as is their merry wont, makes our boat (heavy as it is) rock again as we cross her wake.

The glimpse we soon descry of our inn is not unwelcome, nor is the hot breakfast, with its incomparable bloaters, which we are soon enjoying. We are back at Lowestoft by midday, and vote the trip a great success and worth perhaps repeating at some distant day when we have quite recovered the effects of early rising.

Similar fishing may be sometimes enjoyed on

the Yare and other Norfolk rivers without such early hours.

The chief difference in the proceedings is caused by the powerful tide which is often encountered, and which renders it necessary to secure your boat with the greatest care by means of long and heavily shod poles, for the river is fifteen feet deep in some of the best bream swims. All this makes it hard and exciting work, for in spite of all your exertions a pole will sometimes be dragged out by the ebbing tide, causing the boat to swing round and threaten to pull out the other pole. If this happens it is a serious disaster, for you will be a quarter of a mile away before your oars can be shipped and the row back begun.

Altogether a day on the Yare without a boatman is a very different thing from Thames fishing in a punt, and will test your strength and nerve as much as any ordinary rowing trip.

There is another type of fishing also to be had on Norfolk broads, as it is also on Devon leys and on the Irish loughs—the pursuit of the gamesome rudd. By far the most agreeable way to take these fish is by fly; and in bright and sunny weather the sport is often fast and furious, though not among the very biggest rudd, which are rather shy of flies and take a bait more freely. I have seen these fish taken, by bait, near the surface up to nearly three pounds in weight; but it is

amusing enough to play the smaller fish on fine fly-tackle; and as you have to cast far off from your boat in any case, this method is actually easier than bait-fishing.

If rudd are not showing, it is best to throw some bread-crusts in, so that the wind drifts them past the boat. The rudd will find them out and nibble at them, and whilst this is going on you throw your fly. Two or three flies are used at once, the most successful being tiny black gnats, which may be allowed to sink a little, and then drawn gently through the water. Some knack is required in hooking your fish, for they do not take boldly, but follow the fly and make snatches at it.

If they get shy, it is well to put on a little sedge or wickham, and cast it dry and let it float. This will tempt shy rudd or roach, but it is not often necessary to take so much trouble over them. They will sometimes come at your flies two or three at a time; and if you chance to get two rudd of a pound apiece at once, there is a fine disturbance until they are netted.

CHAPTER X

Over the Border

WHEN an English angler crosses the Tweed for the first time, his nerves can hardly fail to thrill with a certain feeling of entering the land of romance.

If, instead of crossing Tweed, you reach the Caledonian shores by way of Carlisle and Gretna, the touch of ancient mystery is scarce diminished. Not so many years ago that historic blacksmith who welded so many matrimonial chains was still plying his romantic trade, and the roads resounded with the hoofs of horses, pursuing and pursued.

Those who expect high mountains to rise before them, towering into the sky, as soon as the border is passed, will be much deceived; for the country, though open and undulating, has no claim to rugged beauty till we are well past famous Ecclefechan and are nearing the moors round Moffat.

Here the Annan valley becomes somewhat more romantic, and the angler who is keen on mountain fishing in the burns will pause awhile and carefully explore their innermost recesses. No doubt he will

feel much tempted by convenience of train service to run straight on to Edinburgh; but if it is the fishing he puts first, he certainly will find himself worse off so near a busy town, full of keen fishers.

Even to stay at Moffat, rather than find rough shelter in remoter corners, will be found to cause some loss of time and much expense; but the lovely drives, to some men, will atone for that.

Perhaps the wisest for a stranger with some little time to spare is to make this pretty town his first head-quarters, and after trying all the streams within his reach (and they are many), to select the one that suits him best.

As to times and seasons, he will find it well to carefully remember that for trout May is best, while April and June are nearly as good. Later on herling, and now and then sea trout, begin to run; but for these he must go some miles down the Annan. The grilse and salmon arrive later still, and the last are seldom met with till October, and not often caught even then.

All through the summer pretty sport is had with little trout upon Loch Skene, a fine, secluded sheet of water far up the hills, towards St. Mary's Loch. In this latter, also, many trout are caught by those who know their ways. To the stranger they are very shy. On Skene the fish are sometimes fairly bold; but it is even there uncertain work,

and I prefer the burns, which nearly always yield their trout by dozens. Yet pay Loch Skene a visit, if only to admire the lofty precipice which rises so abruptly at its head, and the wild peat-hag-ridden country which for countless miles surrounds it on all sides.

If time allows, a run through Edinburgh to Glasgow, and back south through Galloway, will round off a month of very pleasant travel; and an active angler, who can penetrate on foot the wilds of Galloway, and find her dark sequestered lochs, will have some pretty sport among the trout.

Let him be prepared, however, to catch chiefly smallish fish, for even in the rivers trout often barely average the quarter-pound, while on the burns they run but half that size. Even in the lochs (except perhaps Skerrow), trout are either rather small (say half-pound or so) or very scarce. In the late summer and the autumn this defect is partly remedied in rivers and sea burns, such as Skyre, by the occasional presence of the silvery herling, or scarce sea trout, not to speak of grilse or salmon, both of which are quite within your reach on rare occasions.

Of the scenery I need not add a word to all the vivid pictures of this charming district coming from the pen of Barrie, of Crockett, or McLaren.

All around Dumfries the country seems to cry aloud the name of Robert Burns, and on his statue

in the market place of that somewhat grimy town there is no name. It is simply dedicated to "Scotland's National Poet," and this is perhaps sufficient to indicate the Scotch opinion of his merits; but I think some of the "Englishry" would be inclined to say the statue ought to represent Sir Walter Scott!

For even tolerable fishing one must go some distance from the town, and then, at certain seasons, when water serves, the Nith will yield you sport. Yet the burns are more productive, if you are satisfied with little fish.

Half-way to New Abbey I found a pretty bit of fishing, but I cannot warrant it is really free, though there was nothing to indicate otherwise.

As an instance of the curious bits of sport we sometimes meet with on these rivers, I will quote from a letter just sent me by a Scotch friend:

"In that deep pool you know so well I had been whipping with two tiny flies and drawn gut cast. A small trout took a fly, and jumped on feeling the hook. Dropping the point of the rod, I let him dive, and when I put on the strain once more there was a strong resistance, and I made sure a kelt was hooked. After long play I found he was *a trout*, looking 9 lbs. in weight, evidently not hooked, but holding to his prey with desperation!

"Only as I had got him nearly out did he open his mouth and lose his meal.

"Next day you may guess I spun that pool in style. Not a touch!

"Before leaving I threw the fly again to get a dish of trout. The first cast secured a little samlet. The thought crossed my mind, 'Will that trout come again in the same way?' It seemed absurd to expect it; but he *did* come, and was hooked!

"Before I got him nearly beaten all the village had turned out to watch, and give inconsistent orders to me. But a net was brought, and with it, at last, after a most exciting struggle of half an hour, I brought to bank a 4-lb. trout, hooked with the end fly when he ran at the samlet on the dropper. A curious part of the fun was the dance that poor *samlet* was led, through air and water, before shaken off."

The river alluded to here is the Annan, where the trout-fishing is free and there is no close time, and where, therefore, the trout are very shy, and perhaps rather scarce. There are a lot of fine fish in some of the deeper and less accessible pools; there is one long pool, overhung with tall trees throughout its length, and too deep to wade easily. It is impossible to fly-fish the place properly, and the only chance to see the fish, though the water may be crystal clear, is to climb one of the over-hanging trees and look down from that point of vantage.

Then, indeed, you will be repaid for your labour,

for lying near the bottom are trout of all sizes up to 3 or 4 lbs., and sometimes, in autumn, a grilse or salmon. The fish are hard to tempt, but a small red worm on fine tackle, placed carefully, and patiently waited upon, does sometimes secure a good fish, and probably a live minnow would do even better. I saw a nice sea trout killed the last time I was there, but that was by an old hand, accustomed to very deep wading, and very skilful at spinning the minnow. He has also taken salmon from the same pool.

The plan adopted for getting a sight of fish in such pools is one well worth trying whenever the trees are climbable, for the certainty that there are good fish in a pool makes all the difference in the pains that it is worth while to take to get at it.

For the benefit of Scotch tourists who want to do some fishing on the rivers, and who yet cannot go north, except at the conventional holiday time during the late summer, when the trout-fishing is at its worst of all the season, a few hints will be useful as to how to make the best of a barren time. I am presupposing that the weather is sultry, for if it is a wet, or even a dull and windy season, some trout can be had in the ordinary way.

In a normal summer you have a choice of three alternatives. To fish with very fine tackle and a tiny red worm up stream, and with the greatest caution. (This plan is very difficult, and not often

successful, except in the hands of a native.) Or to use the natural fly in suitable pools, calm and overhung with trees or bushes. (This is sometimes productive of good fish, though not of many, and it is always interesting, as you can watch your fish.) But better than either is it to leave your fishing till night. When light begins to fade a little, take your rod, with a well-tried cast, and two flies at most upon it, and stroll down to the river, with a friend who knows the pools as well by night as day.

The "locals" you will often see sitting and chatting on the banks till nearly dark before beginning, but you will be using finer tackle, and will find it worth while to start while daylight yet lingers in the open glades; and you may thus secure a fish or two ere the natives throw a fly.

As the light fades out the scene assumes a weird and ghostly character, and the corncrake's cry, harsh as it is, seems softened by surroundings. Moths are about and on the water, though you cannot see them; for a little splash ever and anon announces one has just fulfilled his destiny, and helped to line the stomach of a hungry trout.

Cast where you see the ring, for all the night it is light enough for good eyes to do that, after your ears have told you whereabouts to look. If the trout sees your fly he makes no bones of taking it, and with the short line you will be

using you can quickly land him. Waste no time, as the fish go off for hours sometimes after the first meal, which they take as soon as dusk has fairly settled down.

Many anglers then lie down on the warm shingle, and take a rest for an hour or two, till roused by splashes to renewed activity.

This involves returning home at a rather uncanny hour, and on the whole it is as well to make a start when the first rise is over, which is perhaps eleven o'clock or so, contented to forego the chance of a sea trout or salmon, which sometimes occurs in early morning, ere the dawn appears.

Besides the trout and sea trout you may often hook numbers of herling, which are young sea trout, and give fine sport, their rushes being fast and furious and their leaps most lively.

If you are near a loch, not too frequented, it will be worth while to take a day or two, and the style of fishing you there will find makes a pleasant variety. Most mountain lochs are rocky, and many are shallow near the edges, and indented with little bays and inlets; and all round these the trout are playing near the weeds and sedges. Cast your flies (of which there should be three) as near the rises as you can, and keep them moving, without attempting any floating dodges, unless the loch is very calm and sunny, when a fly patiently floated

will sometimes tempt big trout, deaf and blind to other methods. In ordinary breezy weather you may meet with lots of little trout by casting in the ripples; and if you have a boat the work is livelier still, and gives you more excitement, for on the larger lochs a sudden squall will raise quite a rough sea in almost no time, and some care and coolness is required to keep your boat from shipwreck on the jagged rocks.

Often the trout rise best in the surf, as the little waves break on the shore, and then it is best to land and cast with a short line against the wind; not throwing from above, but cutting with your rod under the wind, choosing moments of temporary lulling. Adepts with the fly on southern streams are apt to think loch-fishing hardly worthy their attention. Let them try it.

With a nice breeze just rippling the surface and a good boatman "keeping her just right," of course the task is easy. Any one can cast out a few yards with the wind, and keep his line fairly straight. Fish hook themselves, and the tackle being strong are no trouble to manage. The tyro even under these conditions may count his fish by dozens, but these should be credited to the boatman and the weather. Now this latter is, we know, generally far from being in that medium state which constitutes perfection. In a dead calm, not so very uncommon on lowland lochs,

the trout rival in shyness those of Test or Itchen, and, alas! are very different in size.

A long and light cast with floating fly may indeed secure the fish which made that dimple; but, after all, what is he? Just a half-pound trout perhaps, at best. To fill a basket with such fish, and smaller, stalked in careful fashion, takes much time and labour, and no one unskilled in delicate casting will succeed at all. Perhaps the opposite conditions are more common. In a violent gale fishing is dangerous from boats and almost impossible from the shore.

In moderately windy weather it takes a clever boatman to keep her head right, and a skilful fly-fisher to keep his line on the water, and yet fairly straight. Also a quick eye and hand to see, and take advantage of, the rises. Many fish will hook themselves, no doubt; and in a wind, though high, most anglers will secure a tolerable basket.

On the whole the fishing is the pleasanter that can be enjoyed without the aid of boats; and in lochs with rocky edges sport is often good, in breezy weather, from the bank, or better still by wading. Trout are nearly always to be found near jutting headlands or by beds of weeds, or still more certainly at the mouth of each little stream which feeds the loch.

Next to the magic charm experienced in ex-

ploring a mountain burn is that of wandering round a loch but little fished and casting for its unsophisticated trout, whose size you know not, though I must confess these mystic trout are often rather small.

Turning to the rivers once again, the tourist complains sometimes he cannot find the larger trout in Scottish rivers, and catches small fry only. I fear the difficulty is that all the larger fish, including salmon, grilse, and sea trout, often lie nearly dormant in daytime near the bottom of the deeper pools.

In some of these success may be occasionally obtained by the plan already described, that is if the trees are handy; but it is chiefly in very early morning or late at night that the largest fish come out to feed, and it is at such times that nearly all the big trout and grilse which fall to the rods of Scotch anglers in free rivers are taken.

DARENTH, FIGHTING COCKS, HORTON KIRBY.

CHAPTER XI

Here and There

HOW many pleasant memories I have of angling here and there, and almost everywhere! Clearest of all, because most constantly repeated, shine the scenes on Kentish streams; and of all these the Darenth.

The angler's expectations here should be kept in narrow limits, for the trout are not like those of Hampshire, large and lusty; nor will they jump into your basket by the dozen, as from a mountain burn. Midway between the two extremes they rank; and while in size they fall far short of the Test fish, they want almost as careful casting, as the least mistake will put them down.

I am speaking now of the full-sized fish, a pound apiece, or nearly. The smaller trout can sometimes be had with little trouble on the shallow ripples; and some of these will reach the limit of ten inches, at which they may be kept.

On some few reaches, where the water breaks and curls while stones impede its course, the wet, fly fishers may do very well in spring, but must be prepared to put back many fish. It is on the smooth glides that the typical summer fishing is chiefly to be had; and of all forms of angling this—"the dry fly"—is perhaps the highest.

To see a master of the art lay careful siege to a rising fish is a treat indeed. Kneeling or crouching behind a bunch of rushes, if no better cover be at hand, he takes up his position some dozen yards or so below the feeding fish. He then, by making false casts in the air, or perhaps along the grass, will get his distance. Waiting after this till the fish has risen twice in one spot, he sends his fly with a gentle steady cast, alighting with cocked wings, six inches perhaps above the spot on which the rise occurred.

The delicate quill-gnat, well oiled, floats naturally down, and as it passes by the spot another tiny dimple may be seen, the angler's wrist will give a gentle turn, and the battle has begun.

A fish thus fairly hooked will seldom break his hold, and as on Darenth weeds are weak and fish not very large, the angler often wins the victory by patience and by skill.

It is the practice of the strictest sect of the dry-flyers always to wait for a rise before making a single cast. This may often be best in the

end, for water is often disturbed by premature casting, yet I find most anglers agree with me in thinking that a tentative cast, say over a patch of gravel between two beds of weeds, will often secure a hovering fish that had not been seen to rise at all.

I fancy that mortal anglers, with limited time, will always be tempted, in spite of the protests of the "inner brethren," to try all really likely spots, even if no fish are just then rising there. The dry-fly purist should have lived among the patriarchs; his leisurely ways require a longer life than that we now enjoy. His example is in one thing very good. Quiet greys and drabs are rigidly adhered to in his dress; and his head-gear is but a cap of modest tweed.

To approach the shy, well-educated trout in these clear and smoothly flowing waters, such dress is quite essential; and I think even rough mountain sport is sometimes rendered better by a sober dress.

Somehow the subject of costume brings the ladies to one's thoughts; and many are the fair forms and faces that now haunt the river-side, till one begins to think Undine and other water sprites have donned tweed suits, and openly made war upon their friends the fishes.

To judge by what we see in *Field* and other papers, of the mighty salmon and the lively grilse

taken by the Honourable Miss—— and Lady——, the fair sex is just as skilful in this sort of fishing as in others. And of all kinds of angling, saving that of which the ball-room is the scene, surely casting the light fly for trout should be the lady's favourite sport.

Is not almost every detail such as suits the sensitive feminine touch better than the rough hand of man? Ladies make already many of our most dainty flies, and when they take to using them in earnest, they will whip their clumsy male competitors off the stream. We shall have perhaps a Ladies' Fly-Fishers' Club, with its feminine form of dinner or tea; and strapped to the cycle on which each fair maiden now takes the road, will often be a fairy trouting rod.

How the owners of choice waters will be distracted by dainty envelopes containing touching appeals for permission to take out those highly valued trout that cost so many guineas to rear up!

And am I wronging the innocent creatures by hinting that sometimes they will poach? When a lady receives a ticket to fish "with fly only," will it not be hard to persuade her that this excludes the natural insect? Few keepers will be found to bind a lady down to certain boundaries, or even to induce her to return the

smallest of small captives. Yet, in spite of all —welcome are the ladies to the angler's craft!

In July and August fish are often almost unapproachable by day. Anglers then must start as night begins to fall, and using sometimes a grey moth, or *bustard* (a purely local name in the North of England) and sometimes merely ordinary flies, fish, with short line, the more open portions of a familiar stream. For once or twice it is a fascinating change, and a weird experience it always is. If you chance on a dark still night, when fish are feeding well, the result is often good. The fly is seized with a bold dash, and a good trout, or may be a herling, is all over the place (and perhaps round your legs, if wading) in a moment. Though you may lose many, you will by midnight often bring a dozen decent fish to basket.

Even on bad feeding nights (too light, perhaps, or windy), the frequent gentle twitches at your fly keep your attention up, and if sharply responded to, result now and then in the capture of a little trout.

The chances also for sea trout and grilse are often greater by night than day; and even when sport fails, the novel circumstances have a sort of charm.

What a contrast to all this it is to cast one's gaudy flies, in bright sunshine, on the wind-

flecked surface of a moorland loch! Those I have fished exacted a steep climb before their rocky margins could be reached, and then have yielded but uncertain sport. Few of the larger fish would rise at all, and there were times when all the silvery surface of the loch had not a ring upon it.

When they did come on, the sturdy fish, though barely half a pound apiece, fought like tigers; and sometimes the fun was fast and furious. The wind seemed our friend in making the fish bold; and yet I had some of my best trout in perfect calms.

Even when sport is poor, the scenery on a remote Scotch loch is compensation enough for the hardships endured in reaching it; and then there is, to the young, a delicious sense of danger as the waves rise high. Dwellers among the fat and lazy meads of Southern England can hardly realize that such scenes as these exist, unless they journey thither.

Let all southern anglers then devote at least one early summer holiday to the lochs of Scotland, and if they do complain, as is likely enough, of light baskets and wet jackets, they will at least bring back, stored in their memories, such a series of magnificent pictures as will reconcile them even to the extortions of a Scotch hotel.

Not that all Scotch inns are quite alike. Some I found whose keepers owned a conscience; and

in the spring the place is not much crowded. The sport is also tending to improve; and this is certainly attributable partly to the introduction of fresh blood into many of the streams and lochs.

Fish culture is indeed essential now, if trout-fishing is to be worth having; and Scotland is not behindhand in the matter, having two or three capital fish-cultural establishments within its borders. One of these being in my line of travel when in Galloway, I devoted a few hours to exploring its wonders; and well I was repaid. This is not the place to describe it fully, but I came away convinced of the immense advantage anglers must be reaping from such undertakings.

Incidentally I have had to admit that trout-fishing is not a sociable amusement. Let me qualify this a little. When on duty, as it were, the genuine fly-fisher shuns his kind, no doubt. If you think this a proof of misanthropy, a chat with the same man, after fishing is over for the day, will soon undeceive you. Indeed, I fancy that anglers, debarred as they are from sociability when fishing, will often be found ready to make up for it at night.

It must not be taken for granted either that fishermen's talk is all of fish and fishing. However intent an angler may be on success in his craft, he can hardly fail to have his interest awakened by the romantic legends attached to

many of the scenes through which his wanderings will lead him. For instance, when exploring the wild moorland country from Dumfries to Newton Stewart and Creetown, in quest of salmon or trout, he can scarcely go ten miles in any direction without passing through the scenes of such legends as that of young Lochinvar and his bride, or such events as the slaughter at Glen Trool.

The Stewartry indeed is full, from end to end, of these associations. Here was buried Helen Walker (the original of Jeannie Deans), and there Robert Paterson, who was "Old Mortality."

As we tramp along the lovely coast road between Gatehouse and Creetown, we feel that we are in the midst of a land made famous by the Wizard of the North. Nor is this all, for many a remote and secluded moor, such as those around Loch Grannoch, have lately become familiar to many of us by means of that new school of Scottish fiction that has just arisen, and of which "Jim" Barrie and S. R. Crockett are the chief exponents. On both sides of Kirkcudbright are counties just as famous; for in them flourished the Ayrshire ploughman and the Ecclefechan philosopher. On a lower platform perhaps, but still unrivalled in their separate ways, we have the Ettrick shepherd and the genial "North." The whole district is indeed exceptionally rich in literary ore; and though

the angler all around our isles will meet with many a memento of the mighty dead, in few places will they be so thickly strewn as here.

Perhaps Cornwall, with its little river Camel, running near Tintagel ruins, will awake an interest almost as keen; for here King Arthur fought and met his death, though buried far away in Wales.

This land as well, the home of stream and mountain, and the theme of many a harper's song, is haunted by the angler in the spring. Few now read Macpherson's Ossian; and of those who do I verily believe the greater part are anglers who have heard the waves "resounding" on those sandy shores.

It was near a river that Beth-Gelert died; and and if his dying yell is ever heard, still sounding, it is by an angler's ear.

The lovely lakes of Wales, familiar as they are to every tourist, are far better known to those who carry rod and creel.

Of our English lakes the same is true, and of the streams that water all the land. In quiet southern districts perhaps we miss the mighty mountains, and the streams flow smoothly.

No sudden spates, with but a "Skyreburn warning," such as we expect in Galloway, ruffle the calm bosom of the Hampshire Test. The Itchen still pursues its placid course in storm or shine,

while studious lads from Winchester's old school-house throw the fly, and try to tempt its fat and wily trout.

And how full is Winchester of ancient memories! Is not its old Cathedral a study for a year, and has it not within its time-worn walls King Arthur's table, and many a relic of the ancient times when it was capital of all our land?

As the angler works his cautious way along the river banks, St. Cross appears, and claims attention, with its hospitable doors.

Throughout the length and breadth of all the island, it is the same; the systematic traveller may see more perhaps; but many a rambling angler will see much.

And here I would acknowledge that we owe a debt to those old monks who always took good care to plant their buildings near a running stream. We know it was in part because of fast days and for fish to feed on; yet these godly men had perhaps an eye to picturesque surroundings.

This at least is certain, that where rivers run there beauty will be found, unless the hand of man has marred it; and the angler, as he rambles through these varied scenes, if not too keen on sport, will note them all, and carry to his home far more enduring memories, of sylvan scenes at least, than can be retained by tourists hurrying through.

CHAPTER XII

Fly-taking Fish and their Haunts

Salmonidæ (Salmon, Trout, and Grayling)

SALMON (*Salmo salar*)

IT is doubtful whether salmon ought to head this list, for many anglers are of opinion that this fish never takes the angler's lure for a fly at all; and it is certain that most salmon flies have very little resemblance to any known insect.

It has lately been stated, however, by more than one authority that salmon have been seen to rise regularly and take the natural flies; and this being so, the point is proved, as far as these particular salmon are concerned; but it must be admitted that trout take flies much more regularly, and, in fact, during summer, live chiefly upon insects.

I do not pretend to be much of an authority on salmon-fishing; but from the statements made by anglers quite independently of one another,

it seems highly probable that the salmon generally takes a fly fancying that it resembles a living shrimp, that being a dainty morsel on which it has in many cases been recently feeding.

A live shrimp (as will be admitted by those who have watched them in the little rocky pools, or have held them to the light, as I have) is a very different creature from the dull, flesh-coloured opaque object it appears as seen on a fishmonger's stall.

Iridescent colours illuminate its darting form, and it really is not much unlike a dancing "Jock Scott," as seen from below. This is merely a theory on the subject, and not original either, and can only take rank as one of the many formed on this much-disputed point.

With regard to the salmon itself, no one will deny that it is one of the most beautiful fishes ever created. If he lacks the crimson spots and golden sides of his kinsmen, the trout, he has a magnificent silvery sheen, hardly to be equalled by any other fish, and a symmetry of form as perfect as can be imagined. Then for strength and fleetness he is hard to beat. His lines seem formed for rapid motion, and how it is that the apparently unwieldy porpoise can catch, and even think it worth while to pursue, the flashing salmon is to me an unsolved problem.

Indeed, I would not have believed that they at-

tempted it, except from the evidence of my eyes, as I watched a school of porpoises chasing the salmon on the top of the water at the mouth of the Dart.

The salmon is the king of fish, and will, I think, remain so; for though the tarpon, that gigantic herring, affords even more magnificent sport when being played, it is far inferior to the salmon in some respects, notably in the methods which must be adopted in its capture. In fact, there is no large fish, except a salmon, that will rise freely to the fly.

From February to November, in one river or another in the British Isles, the salmon is to be had; and he seems to care but little what the weather is, if only the water is about the height that suits him.

To see the salmon-fishers starting off in a snow storm to tempt fish with gaudy flies, fit only to flit upon the surface of a sunlit stream, seems truly absurd; yet the practice is justified by its results, and often the early spring and late autumn fishing is the best.

Other methods besides fly have often to be adopted, for the salmon will sometimes refuse to come to the surface, and he must then be caught, if at all, either by spinning a minnow (the next best way to the fly) or by worm or prawn. In some rivers, such as the Trent, salmon will very

seldom touch a fly, under the most favourable conditions, and in these streams they are patiently angled for at the bottom, often by artisans and others of quite a different class from that to which salmon-fishers usually belong. For, as may be imagined, fly-fishing for salmon is in very great demand, and high rents are gladly paid for rivers affording any chance of success with this lordly fish.

In fact, the cost of salmon-fishing is so enormous as to place the sport beyond the reach of the middle-class angler, unless he has a friend of wealth and position willing to give him the necessary opportunity. This refers chiefly to the spring fishing; for in the autumn, when most of the richer sportsmen have turned their attention to grouse and partridges, and when the salmon are somewhat inferior to the brilliant silver-clad beauties that ascend the rivers in the spring, the sport is less extravagant in price, and may sometimes be obtained even by humble anglers, quite unable to afford a hundred pounds for perhaps a month's amusement.

It must also be remembered that many anglers who fish only for trout will hook the nobler game, and on occasion land it. This is sometimes done by trout-fishers at times when low water has robbed the regular salmon men of all chance of sport with their stout tackle; and now and then, acting on the hint, they change their casts for

finer with advantage, though a fine cast used with a salmon rod is apt to cause disaster unless a very gentle hand is wielding it.

TROUT (*Salmo fario*)

The fly-fisher could, I think, better spare all other fish that swim than this.

From the tiny burn trout, seldom reaching a quarter of a pound, to the mighty leviathan of the Thames or of the Irish lakes, weighing 15 or 20 lbs., or even to the grand specimens met with in transatlantic waters, which reach double that weight, the fish is always game, a foeman worthy of one's steely hook.

From March till mid-October every clear and unpolluted river, if also fairly rapid, ought to yield its quota of these gamesome fish.

In parts of our midland and eastern counties they seem absent, even from fairly suitable streams; but in nearly every other part of the British Isles the trout is to be found.

A few years ago he was in some danger of extinction, so great was the growth of angling, and so little care was taken to protect him; but of late years fish-culture has kept pace with fishing; and though it is harder to catch trout than formerly, this is owing, not to decrease in numbers, but to increase in education, and also partly to

the very sensible conditions now usual on most English trout-fisheries, providing that fish shall be taken by fly alone, and small fish returned.

In waters where the fish are much above the usual size this clause is not so common, as it has been found that fish of over 4 lbs. will very seldom take a fly at all. Spinning with artificial bait is then the method adopted, and this on the Thames and other big-trout waters is sometimes successful, even with the largest fish.

To be methodical it will be best to divide trout into several classes:—

First. The moorland trout, in which may be included all fish under half a pound.

Second. The river trout, or fish which average about three-quarters of a lb., and sometimes reach 3 or 4 lbs. in weight.

Third. Lake trout and other monsters belonging chiefly to the genus *Ferox*, and weighing from 2 lbs. to 20 lbs.

Fourth. Thames trout, which in size resemble the last mentioned, but in form are more like the others.

Fifth. Sea trout and herling, which are believed to be a race of brown trout which has taken up with sea-going habits, and has been modified in appearance in consequence; till now, when fresh from sea, it is almost as silvery as a salmon and as slender in form, while it lacks the

crimson spots by which its home-staying kinsmen are ornamented.

There is so little radical difference between these varieties of trout that a general description, of a non-scientific character, can be given which will apply roughly to them all.

It is a fish of graceful, though very powerful build, with small scales so closely set as to be barely visible, with a large though not ugly mouth, lined with sharp teeth which extend into the throat. Its fins are strong and of ample size, but none of them have the abnormal character presented by the dorsal fin of the grayling or perch.

The little fin next to the tail is always stunted, and consists of fatty matter; hence its name, the "adipose" fin.

This is the distinctive mark of the salmon tribe, and never varies materially, except in colour, being generally orange in the samlet and pink in the trout.

Trout are always spotted more or less, and in an ordinary river trout many of the spots are of a bright crimson, and this colouring, combined with the golden sheen on its sides and its silvery belly, gives it a most brilliant appearance.

On some lakes, and even in some rivers, the spots and marks on the trout are all of a dark colour, and in these cases the general tint of the fish is rather silvery than golden, so that its ap-

pearance approaches nearly to that of the salmon, and still more to the sea trout, which never has pink spots, and when fresh from the sea is almost as silvery as a salmon. In shape it also tends to resemble *Salmo salar*, but its mouth seems a little larger in proportion.

In describing the habits of trout, it will be necessary to distinguish more carefully; for the Hampshire trout, of the upper Test for instance, though averaging quite as large as the sea trout, has totally different manners and customs.

As soon as breakfast-time arrives, he poises himself close to the surface in his favourite eddy over his particular little parlour, the floor of which is sanded with clean gravel; and remaining motionless, except for his quivering fins, waits for the little duns to float over him. If another trout of a size smaller approaches, it is promptly driven away, for the fish each appropriate a certain spot, and the biggest is apt to take the best. If caught, his place will be permanently filled by the next in size within a few hours, so that the angler always knows where to look for good trout.

Those fish, often large, though not always fat, which inhabit mill-heads or other still pools, form different habits, for they find it necessary to roam about in search of their food; and the angler has to watch very carefully, and throw very promptly, to get a chance.

The ways of sea trout and of lake fish are quite different, as they seem very capricious in their feeding, but when they are rising are much less shy than the well-educated fish of the inland rivers. This is natural in the case of sea trout, as they have been far from the haunts of men for many months, if fresh run; but lake trout, which do not go to sea, are also rather capricious, and are only shy when the surface is very calm.

The moorland fish vary very much in their ways, according to the nature of the pools they frequent; and it may be taken for granted that in gently flowing and deep parts of the moorland streams the fish will acquire some of the characteristics of their larger brethren, and get shy as they become fat.

Even in the smaller streams each little trout will generally have his special haunt, even if it is only an eddy a foot across; and if you see a lot of erratic rises in some thin shallow, you may put them down as due to samlets. If there is a big hatch of flies, the trout will sometimes rise wildly all over the place; but this is not to be counted on.

In the larger rivers trout do not always continue feeding during the whole hatch of fly, if it is very long, as they seem to be sated; but this seldom happens to the less fortunate fish of the upper streams, where food is far less abundant.

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The moorland trout is a fish even more widely distributed in the British Isles than even the roach or the dace. From John o'Groats to Land's End, and from the west of Ireland to the east of Yorkshire, there is scarce a county that does not yield its trout, though sometimes the race is very stunted and almost extinct, owing either to pollution or to poaching.

From the rocky ridge which forms the backbone of the Devon-Cornwall district flows down, north or south, many a rippling stream, to become in some cases ere it reaches the sea a majestic river, like the Dart or Teign.

In the tail of this peninsula the fish are very small, and a Cornish trout of 2 oz. is a decent fish, the average being often under that modest weight. To make up for this the trout are numerous and lively, and not so very shy; and from a Cornish moor an active angler will secure his dozens in a day. Sometimes many dozen of these brunettes, with their deep golden sides, will grace his basket, especially if he should be there in fern-web season, and know how to use that deadly lure.

I advise that "coch' y' bondu" should be used, and the stream whipped with that, for it imitates the fern-web fairly well.

Yet if weather should be sultry, as in July and August it often is even in Cornwall, let the angler

search the fern-fronds most exposed to sunlight, and collect a few shining greenish beetles, which are easily caught.

Then kill one, and after carefully opening its double wings, attach it to a tiny hook, and drop it near your own bank in any likely places. Trout, if there, and not alarmed, will take it at once, and should be allowed half a second and then jerked out promptly. Any fancy playing disturbs other fish, and is mostly unnecessary. Fishing thus you may put two or three dozen trout in your basket in an hour or two, while the web is about; and when evening comes on, it will be easy to add a few more with artificial fly.

The coachman I have found the most seductive to these Cornish fish, but blue duns and red and black palmers are sure to have their turn.

As we approach the east of Cornwall, near the Devon boundary, fish tend to run a little larger, but a quarter-pound fish is still comparatively rare, and all around Plymouth the streams are most industriously fished by experts, so that a basket of two dozen is a fair day's sport.

If the angler penetrates into the remoter recesses of Dartmoor, on entering Devon, he will find his fishing very similar, the fish of upper Dart and its tributaries being just like Cornish fish. The flies are similar, with the difference that here the blue dun, or rather blue upright, heads the list.

Of course when fishing these rough and broken waters fine tackle is not a real necessity, yet there are many pools in which a coarse cast scares away all the best trout; and therefore it is well to use fine gut, though not drawn, for the last few links.

The natives often have four or five flies attached, but I think two or three will be found enough. Some men, accustomed to delicate south-country work, persist in using only one, but the bob-fly often can be worked to great effect in tiny stickles where you could not see your fly at all if only one were on.

In the northern part of Devon the rivers are mostly rapid and broken till within a short distance of the sea, the fall being great and the distance short, but on the southern side some rivers, such as Avon, Dart, and Teign, become more tranquil as they near their mouths, and require different methods of fishing to command success. Between Totnes and Staverton, for instance, on the Dart, are deep and sullen pools, shaded with mighty trees. Here lurk gigantic trout, at least for Devon, and here in hot summer days the artificial fly is nearly useless; and the angler who means to catch them must resort to natural insects, and, crawling to the bank, must dap them gently on the stillest pools. These fish, perhaps, sometimes are overlarge to rank as moorland trout; but after all,

even in this sort of fishing, most of your fish are barely half a pound.

In the Teign the same change of character takes place as one travels down; but the fish, I think, are hardly equal to the trout of Dart.

Two more Devon rivers still remain, though both are very near the Dorset border; and both these streams contain good store of trout and of an average size, decidedly above any we yet have met with.

The Otter, which comes first, is a fine stream to fish in spring, and yields a lot of pretty half-pound trout, with now and then a bigger fish. It is somewhat strictly preserved in most parts, but leave can often be had, by payment or by favour. Its upper part, above Honiton, is exceptionally pretty, and is full of fish, running a little smaller than their brothers lower down.

On the Axe the sport is similar, but not so easy, cover being very scarce and fish extremely shy; while in places dace are apt to take your fly and cause a disappointment. The weeds are also very troublesome, especially towards the end of August. Indeed, these rivers are much better fishing in April than any other time. The Axe is partly a Dorset river, and this county has also other streams in which sport may be had.

As we pass through Wiltshire we must stop at Salisbury, if only to enjoy the sight of the

lovely—cathedral? Oh, no! the beautiful spotted trout, always visible in sunny weather from the bridge over the crystal Avon. These fish do not come under our present heading, being akin to the great trout of Hants.

We will pass quickly through the Midland and "home" counties, as the Londoners call them, and go north, touching the skirts of Wales, before we plunge into the moors of Yorkshire and the fells of Cumberland. In North Wales the fish resemble much their cousins of the Cornish streams, and take the "coch' y' bondu" just the same; and in the lakes the fish are very little bigger, and far from plentiful.

After this *détour* we enter Yorkshire, and in Wharfe and Swale find swarms of trout, about the next size bigger—half a pound, or perhaps a little less, may be the average; and here the fish are well accustomed to the sight of man, and know full well his wiles.

The cost of fishing also is much heavier than in wilder districts; near Bolton Abbey, on the Wharfe, for instance, the charge is five shillings a day to anglers.

Going farther north we pass the Ribble (good after strong freshets, but very bright and shallow as a rule), and strike the Eden at Appleby, and find ourselves in a sort of angling centre, with a good, and not too dear, hotel at which to stop;

but most of the fishing near the town is rather strictly preserved, and one must take a little journey every day to reach the best available.

Even here the fish are far from large; but the Eden is a lovely river, and has a name in story, for it is on its banks that is laid the plot of Longfellow's "Luck of Edenhall," and the crystal glass which represents it is still preserved by the family which resides at Edenhall.

All around the Lake District sport is similar; and St. John's valley has a pretty stream right under the shadow of Skiddaw.

As we now go northward we must once again pause, on Eden's bank, at old Carlisle—familiar sound to all northern travellers, and also to the lover of poetry, as being the last word of Macaulay's "fragment," "The Armada." Here the river is large, and not very good for trout-fishing; and most anglers, with burn-trout in view, push on at least to Lockerbie or Ecclefechan, home of Scotland's pride, the great Carlyle.

On the Annan, near this classic spot, is fair fishing for trout; but better when the herling have run up. The charge made in Mr. Brooke's private grounds here is high, and there are lots of chub about, which mar one's chance; so that it is better to go right on to Wamphray or to Moffat—the former for fish and the latter for comfort.

In fishing burns first accept the fact that no

fish of over 6 oz. is likely to be found, and that the average will be about 2 oz., and then be assured that, from April to June at least, few days will cause you discontent; for any average north-country angler will get his four or five dozen little trout on any reasonable day, and sometimes many more. Good-sized brown flies are best, and three at once; for often you may thus secure a brace of fish, and sometimes three.

Of the burns in Galloway, farther west, the best I tried was Skyre burn, which joins the sea near Gatehouse of Fleet, and yields, besides its numerous and lively little trout, a lot of herling, and the larger sea trout also on occasion.

In the lowland lochs the same-sized trout are common, and there are also many bigger fish; but on those I have fished (Loch Skene, Loch Whinyeon, etc.) the trout are mostly under half a pound.

We have now traced trout from south to north, and found him ever lively, gamesome, and cunning, but generally small; and I think that this must be accepted once for all as a condition of this sort of fishing, free, or practically free, as it usually is, for the licences seldom exceed in any district 10*s.* 6*d.* a year, or 5*s.* a week; and in Scotland there is mostly nothing to pay to catch burn-trout, or even to try, generally in vain, to make a basket from the larger streams.

We may go farther north to John o'Groats, or even to the Orkneys, and shall then find, doubtless, less sophisticated fish, and perhaps sometimes a few of better size, especially in lochs far up the hills, and only to be reached by active walkers.

In some sea-washed districts sea trout abound; but as a rule the owners of the streams that flow direct to sea are jealous of their salmon-fishing rights, and do not care to let the stranger cast his line, knowing too well that few among the "honestest" of anglers, to whom old Walton makes allusion, are of such angelic honesty as to put back a salmon, should one chance to take their fly.

The second in the list, the river trout, includes within its ranks all the fish the skilled fly-fisher, having means and leisure, chiefly seeks. From the Kentish Stour and Darenth in the south up to Driffield in the north, these fish are found and carefully preserved.

In the Kentish Darenth the wandering angler can fish by daily payment of *2s.* 6*d.* at the "Plough" at Eynsford, and of 5*s.* at the "Lion" at Farningham, and if skilful will have fair sport with fish of moderate size—one pound and under. To fish the Stour he must join a club, and the trout here are somewhat larger, but the stream is rather sluggish.

Passing by the Wandle, which is most carefully

reserved for "members only," we may in June try the Lambourn, on the pretty Berkshire town of Newbury. Here, in May-fly season, for about 5*s*. one can try for the shy trout, and sometimes get perhaps a fish or two about a pound apiece. At Hungerford, on the Kennet, the fishing is somewhat similar; but it is in Wilts and Hampshire that we find the finest trout of all.

At Winchester the Itchen is a lovely crystal stream, and, as it flows through the town, is as public a river as could be chosen on which to exhibit one's incapacity to catch its large and wily trout. Perhaps this is the reason so few anglers fish the free water, which is full of trout, and prefer to pay 2*s*. 6*d*. or 5*s*. for preserved parts, in which the fishing is almost as difficult.

For the skilled dry-fly man this city is indeed a most congenial abode. Not only is the Itchen at his doors, he has also within easy reach the Anton and the Test, and in this latter river may be had, by those with means to join a rather costly club (and skill to take advantage of the privilege), the finest fishing in the British Isles!

As it is fully treated in another chapter, further mention here is needless; but for the Peri wishing to peep in at Paradise, and finding no club with any vacancy, I may say that at Chilbolton, near Fullerton, leave for moderate payment may sometimes be had.

At many points the Test runs close to public paths, and the angler, even if unable to get leave to fish, may much enjoy watching these magnificent Test trout as they lie, each on his patch of gravel, at the tail of weeds, and rise in a leisurely way at passing duns.

In Derbyshire the fishing on the Dove resembles more that on the Darenth; but the water is more rapid, and the fish, if anything, more difficult to tempt. Passing farther north we find but moorland trout until in Yorkshire the Driffield Beck is reached; and here the dry-fly system is in vogue once more, and skill is quite essential. Here fish will average a pound or so, a weight no other river in this neighbourhood can reach. In some parts of lowland Scotland there are places in the larger rivers where the skilled angler in spring will get some fair-sized trout; but this is seldom, and, roughly speaking, the northern limit for good fly-fishing for large trout is Driffield Beck.

Of the ferox and other monster fish we need not speak at large. The angler seldom meets with them, and when he does can treat them just as he would pike, the tackle used being similar, except that gut may do instead of gimp, and the methods much the same.

The Thames trout is also chiefly caught by spinning and by live-bait, and is perhaps the

handsomest fish our rivers can produce. It is (alas!) also about the scarcest, and none but men of wealth and leisure should set their hearts on such a costly prize. If you decide to do so, put yourself (regardless of the cost), without reserve, in the hands of a first-rate professional of Windsor, or of Maidenhead or Henley, and in time, and after many guineas have changed hands, you may at last secure a glorious 10-lb. fish to grace your sanctum.

THE GRAYLING (*Thymallus or Umbra*)

Next to the gallant trout the shadowy, graceful grayling wins the heart of almost every man who throws a fly. In her suit of silver grey she glides, a very phantom of the waters, lurking at the tail of weeds, by gravelly shallows, always on the watch for flies, yet never poised in deadly earnest like a feeding trout.

It is her modest habit to lie deep in shade, and springing sudden from her cool retreat to snatch a fly, or miss it. Her mighty dorsal fin is clearly meant to aid her in this frolicsome behaviour. No other river fish possesses such a means of sudden locomotion, for the perch's fin, though perhaps as large, appears to act chiefly in defence from pikes' assaults, and the darting pike cannot dart quickly upwards.

Although classed with trout and salmon, the

grayling is in one important point a different sort of fish, for she spawns in spring instead of autumn, and thus affords the angler sport just as trout go out; so that a man with trout and grayling in his stream need seldom let his rod be idle long.

The enemies of grayling make a case against her, it is true, when they note that while the trout is spawning she, being in full condition, will sometimes watch below the spawning beds and gobble up the loose ova floating down.

Many trout preservers, therefore, wage fierce war on grayling, and they may be right, if their only aim is just to rear the finest head of trout the stream will bear; for even if the grayling do not eat much ova, they must of course consume some food which trout might otherwise have thriven on; and therefore, if the stock is large of both, grayling must injure trout to some extent, and if a man is busy shooting all the autumn, as river owners often are, it is but natural that he should disapprove of grayling.

Though the methods which are best for grayling differ much from those in vogue for trout in the same streams (such as Test and Itchen), the tackle may be just the same, except perhaps the fly. A red-quill will take both, and in the end of August and up to mid-September you may use it with success for each; but a calm and sunny day,

in which few trout will rise at any fly, is just the time for grayling; and though it is not orthodox on Test or Itchen, I think it quite as well to use two flies, say a Wickham and a red-tag, for grayling rise in such a careless fashion that they really seem sometimes to aim at one fly and take the other, and among the smaller fish you may also have a rise at both flies at once, and very often both will be missed. Another gentle cast in the same spot may then succeed, for a grayling is sometimes like Bruce's spider, and will keep on trying till she hits the mark.

How different is the sport from the careful, crafty way in which one stalks a giant trout! Wading gently into a broad shallow, you cast your two flies near some tell-tale rings and strike on any indication of a rise or pluck. This you may do a dozen times before you hook a fish, and when you have her fast the play is not like trout.

A grayling will, if large, try tackle very much, for she will rush down stream if possible and then let herself drift, jerking all the while from side to side. These tactics often loosen from her tender lip the delicate hold, and she is free once more. Smaller fish are better fun, as they play dace fashion, and dash about the stream like bars of silver. If gently handled they are seldom lost, for their little mouths, though tender, will bear a moderate strain; while a big fish, if hooked in

outer gristle, may tear out the hold by her own weight, unless the greatest care is taken.

These fish are caught in great numbers in Yorkshire by worm and maggot fishing and by the natural or artificial grasshopper, which is not allowed in Hants and Wilts, where the Test and Avon harbour the largest fish. On the Teme, the Arrow, and the Lugg the grayling give good sport, and are chiefly taken with the fly; but the usual size is far smaller than in Test or Avon, or indeed in Itchen.

Fish of half a pound are, in Yorkshire or Herefordshire, considered quite respectable, and a 2-lb. fish a prize indeed. On the Test that size is fairly common, and pound fish abound, and on the Avon it is much the same, while the Itchen is not very far behind. Yet a day with grayling on the Lugg or Teme or Arrow, or on Yorkshire Swale, has its special charms, for on these streams the scenery is more wild and more romantic.

The Itchen, Test, and Avon wind through gently sloping plains, and their crystal waters seldom break in ripples, and never rush through foaming gorges, as the Yorkshire streams will sometimes do.

It is not in such parts of the waters that the grayling has her haunt, for she loves a gently flowing, even current, and might grow perhaps far bigger in the northern streams if she found a little more tranquillity within them.

Farewell, Lady of the Stream! many a peaceful happy day have I enjoyed in thy society, now basketing and now losing a silvery fish, but never torn by that anxiety the keen pursuit of lordly trout has oft occasioned me.

CHAPTER XIII

Other Fly-taking Fish

Pike, Chub, Perch, Rudd, Dace, Roach, and Bleak

ALTHOUGH bream, carp, and even eels have been caught by fly, the above is a fairly complete list of the fish that can be included in the fly-fisher's list of victims (besides, of course, the Salmonidæ treated in the last chapter).

Small pike are often taken by means of an arrangement of feathers and tin that is by courtesy called a fly. The chief requirements for this lure are plenty of glitter and a brilliant red-tag. The "fly" may be three or four inches long with advantage, though the ordinary Jock Scott or the Alexandra will often succeed in shallow clear water.

I think, also, that the wonderful creation named after its inventor, "General Roome," would be quite as effective with pike as with trout.

The advantage of using flies (even if they are large) instead of fish for bait is that the trout-

fisher, seeing pike basking in the sun on his trout stream, can throw one over the fish without having occasion to bring out a heavy rod for that express purpose. Also a fish of only 2 or 3 lbs. will give fair sport on trout tackle. To set against this is the undoubted fact that a little fish is a better bait for a pike than is any fly.

Perch take a fly still better in the summer, and do not require it to resemble a fish. The coachman and the soldier-palmer have proved, in my experience, the most successful flies for perch; but I must admit that most of the fish taken have been small. Large perch do not seem to swim so near the surface as the younger fish; and I do not think that perch, any more than pike, feed habitually on flies.

It is far otherwise with the soft-mouthed vegetarians which come next on the list. As a fly-taker of size and strength the chub must rank at the head of these. Though in some respects inferior to his lesser brethren, dace, roach, and rudd, in size he leaves them far behind, growing as he will sometimes to 7 or 8 lbs. It is fashionable to abuse the chub as a coarse, cowardly, silly brute; but my experience of him, which extends over more than forty years, does not warrant these hard words. "Coarse" he is, as far as his value for the table is concerned; and I have not a good word for him in that capacity,

except to say that many a poor old man or woman is very thankful to have a fat chub to eat instead of nothing; but I cannot advise any one with an educated palate to attempt to eat a chub.

We are perhaps getting on too fast; for the average chub is not by any means "silly" enough to give you easily a chance to eat him. Let us then consider his "silliness" first. It is true that if you manage to present a basking chub with a nice fat grasshopper in a quiet, unassuming manner, so that the fish sees nothing but the insect and a little bit of gut, he will generally take it without much delay; but all your difficulties have to be overcome before you reach this point.

My experience has generally been that the task is far from easy. You see from afar two or three good chub basking, betwixt shade and sunshine, close to the overhanging boughs of a chestnut.

You manage by stooping, or even crawling, to reach the trunk of that tree, and keeping as carefully on the farther side of it as a squirrel would do if he saw any one approaching, you gradually extend your rod, with a short line and a natural fly at the end, till you can drop the bait within sight of the biggest chub. To do this is almost as hard as to crawl within casting distance of a big trout.

Then you lower your fly, without the slightest jerk, till it touches the water; and this being

neatly done, at last you hook your chub. Then you find out he is not the cowardly brute some anglers who cannot catch him are fond of asserting. His first rush is sometimes quite as violent as that of a trout of the same size, and as you are perhaps using a tight line there is great danger that Byron's "Waterloo ball" words should come in—for "then come sudden partings" only too often, and you are left lamenting, with a broken line instead of a three-pound chub! Should the tackle stand this first mad burst, it is quite true that, with care, the fish is yours, for he will not make another like it.

Still he fights fairly for a few minutes, and does his best to weed you, and carefully avoids the landing-net as long as he can. His strength has been taxed severely by his violence, and he must now give way.

It seems to me that his tactics are as good as the wisest fish could have invented. His only chance of breaking good tackle is that first rush. Even if you have running gear (which is very awkward to manage among thick trees) the advantage is not often great, for the chub, if given line, always makes for tangled roots, and must at any cost be kept out of them.

The best possible tackle for fishing among bushes in this way is a long bamboo, hollowed out thoroughly, so that the line can pass from the butt

to near the tip *inside* the rod. You thus avoid fouling the branches, and have the advantage of running tackle without its drawbacks.

Any sort of fly or insect can be used for bait for chub, and the domestic cockroach is one of the best; and there is some advantage connected with its use, for however many you may abstract from their native haunts (in the pantry or store-cupboard), the wrath of the housewife will not fall upon you, as it would if you used but one spoon (as Dr. Peard did) for a lure for pike or trout.

Perhaps this method of chub-fishing is best adapted for boys, who can crawl freely through all sorts of thorny bushes; and indeed my own memories of fat two-pound chub are mostly connected with my round jacket days.

But the chub is almost as good a fish for artificial fly as the trout in some waters, and is far less carefully preserved. In fact, to take chub or dace from a trout stream is considered a virtue only inferior to the capture of the predatory pike.

It is chiefly, however, in rivers of a slow and quiet course that chub are found in large numbers and of great size. The style of fly-fishing that is most successful in such localities is not quite the same as that adapted for trout, or even for dace.

A light sea-trout rod is most suitable, and tackle to match; but the flies used are not sea-trout flies. A buzzy palmer, either red or black, and a big

governor (almost as large as the wild bumble-bee these flies represent) are best suited for full-sized chub. If you are careful to make no other disturbance, your fly may fall with a good flop, especially if close under boughs; and it may thus attract chub which might not have noticed a less obtrusive insect.

Under the bushes on the opposite side is best for this sort of fishing, and the fish must be dragged into the open at once on being hooked, and will then give but little trouble. The smaller fish, of from half a pound to a pound, are very lively, and much more fun than the grave and reverend seniors with their white heads and light-coloured lips, opening and closing in such a solemn and leisurely manner on your fraudulent fly.

If you find that dace, roach, or rudd are about, and chub are scarce, change your fly for a pair of small ones, say a black gnat and a wickham, on a fine cast, and you may do much better than by sticking to chub.

Next to chub certainly, if indeed it should not rank before the loggerheaded monster, comes the silvery dace. Loving clear and shallow streams, this fish makes his daily meals off flies in summer, and the man who casts a fly with decent accuracy should have often better sport with dace than any bottom-fisher can expect in sunny weather.

On the broad, but sometimes muddy shallows

of the Thames, the dace is often caught in numbers with the fly, and though their size is small the fun is sometimes lively. Almost every river in the midland or the eastern counties has its dace, and in many they are vastly bigger than the fish of Thames. All along the Lea the dace is found in stretches suited to it.

In the upper waters, by St. Margaret's and Ware, the fish attains splendid proportions, if compared with ordinary dace. Occasionally they approach a pound in weight, and specimens exceeding that have once or twice been taken.

In the Lark, near famed Newmarket, many goodly fish are had by fly, but here three-quarters of a pound is about the usual limit. In the Norfolk waters, such as Wensum, fine dace are found; but in Yare and other larger rivers they are scarce.

In the Cam perhaps the largest average is attained, the bottom-fishers often getting dace of near a pound; while one skilful angler once secured a brace that scaled 2¼ lbs. together, a feat probably never equalled yet. It must be confessed that here the fly is not so good as bait, and indeed that the very largest dace are not free risers at the fly at all.

Among the many hundreds I have had with fly not one has reached a pound, and very few approached three-quarters; but the sport they give

if over half a pound is quite enough to try one's skill on tackle fairly fine, especially if, as often happens, two at once are hooked.

On the Hampshire Avon are many lovely spots for dace, both with fly and bait; and the Stour, which runs out into Christchurch Bay close by, is also full of splendid roach and dace.

The roach of these two rivers will seldom take the artificial fly, though the natural is most effective. If they would only feed on flies, as do the roach of the Welland, sport would indeed be lively; for the shoals of roach abounding in the clear, deep pools of Stour and Avon are something wonderful in numbers and in weight.

But to find roach that take the fly in earnest one must travel north, and, halting a few miles beyond Peterborough, fish the Welland, as it passes through the string of villages known as "Deepings."

Here the roach have learnt to take the fly in style, and feed like dace, darting bravely at the coachman, the wickham, or the gnat. The river, unlike most of those which drain the fens, is clear and shallow, with a gravelly bottom. In the sunny days of July and August roach and dace in myriads bask and rise at flies all along the river, and afford fine sport to anglers who can cast a fly. Here the dry-fly man would seem hardly in his place, but many of the fishers

THE WELLAND, MARKET DEEPING, NEAR PETERBOROUGH.

adopt this method, using one dry fly, and say it answers best

Here is sport for all, and the baskets of roach and dace made each calm and sunny day would astonish any London angler. The roach thus taken are not large, nor are they often small, running very even as to size, and averaging nearly half a pound.

In the deeper reaches of the river may be seen large shoals of bigger fish, up to 2 lbs. apiece, and a few jack, often smaller than the biggest roach. These are taken now and then by bottom-fishing. In some reaches of the river a few chub are found, and dace run large; but as a rule roach are the chief fish that even the fly-fisher seeks.

One more important fish remains that takes the fly—the red-eyed rudd. In many a Norfolk broad this fish abounds, perhaps most of all at Hickling, and in all a fly will take him; though, like roach and dace, when very large he much prefers a bait.

In the Devon leys, as Torcross and Slapton, he is also found, and caught by fly, and on the Irish loughs he swarms and grows gigantic. A wickham or a coachman will tempt him best, and when fish run small two flies are very useful, for these little rudd are seldom shy.

The large fish, of 2 lbs. or over, give good

play,—better, I think, than roach,—and keep the fight up well, never knowing they are beaten till quite in the net. The perch in these Devon leys will take a fly well sometimes; but they are often stunted things, from being so abundant.

Of the silvery flashing bleak we need not discourse at any length; its size is too diminutive to warrant much attention. Yet it is a pretty fish, and takes a fly intended for its betters sometimes in Lea or Medway as one whips for chub.

For the budding angler with a hazel wand and line of twisted hair, the bleak seems well adapted, and no doubt many a past master with the fly has taken his first lessons on a stream among the lively bleak.

As an angler starting off to fish an eastern counties stream with fly will not be able, or indeed willing, to confine himself to one sort of fish, a few hints will be useful as to where to look for the different fish in various parts of the river, as he works his way along.

We will presume that trout are not found in the river, but that fly-taking fish of other sorts are plentiful.

Perhaps you first approach an open shallow with but little stream. Here you will see probably some bleak playing about, and nothing else, and it is well to cast for them to get your hand in. Put on a tiny black gnat with white tip, and

cast among a shoal. Plenty of rises, but no fish! A few more casts and you probably succeed, but feel inclined to look with pity on your tiny victim. Put it back, unless perhaps you see a jack-fisher near who may like to accept the shining fish as bait.

The practice you have now had will give you a better chance under those alders which line the opposite bank. But do not use that little fly, for the quiet rises you see are not from bleak. Put on a big governor, and cast right under the boughs. What a flounce! It might have been a pike, only the rush was heavier and less sudden. If your line holds while you keep your chub from the roots, he is yours with time and patience. Yes, but what will you do with him? Three pounds extra in your basket is no joke.

Will that ancient man, stonebreaking hard by, in those curious spectacles, care for chub? Try him. Well, that fish being disposed of, the next cast (which is short of the alders) brings a pretty dace to bank. But then you fish in vain for a while, though dace rise all around. Change your fly; it was a wonder he took a governor at all. A black gnat and a wickham will make a good pair.

A fish on each? Yes, but they pull against one another and the dry gut parts, and the tail fish has gone! Plenty more come on, and before

an hour has passed your creel is half full of half-pound dace, well worth keeping.

Now the rapids are past, and you come to a stretch of calm, weedy water of fair depth. Here the shoals of roach are basking in the sunshine, and must be approached with care.

A fly thrown among them gently causes some commotion, and many of the shoal seem frightened Often one or two seem curious, or hungry, and follow up your fly as you slowly move it. Watch carefully and don't jerk it out, for a roach will often delay to take till just as it seems to be escaping, and then make up his mind. If you have plenty of dace return your roach, for they are poor eating, and if a little jack should take your fly put him back also; but if a perch should seize your coachman, when you try that fly, keep him for supper, and do your best to capture his companions, for they approach a trout in flavour, if only crisply fried.

CHAPTER XIV

Ground-feeding Fish

I

Carp and Tench

THESE fish seem to swim together in one's mind, and they often do so in the stagnant ponds they both can tolerate.

To say they love foul water is a libel. Both these fish are far superior, in appearance and in taste for table, when taken out of clean and wholesome rivers; and in olden times, when fresh fish formed the general diet in some seasons, it was customary to place all fish taken from muddy ponds in clear cisterns for cleansing purposes.

The elaborate recipes given for cooking such a fish as carp show that the old monks thought it at least worth while to try to make it palatable—a feat we should despair of.

As to tench, the fish is a most toothsome morsel, if in good condition, its chief fault being a tendency to over-richness, like an eel.

In Germany the carp is sold alive, and carried

long journeys in damp moss without injury to its health, and forms a staple food. It is a fish of somewhat better breed than ours, and slightly different in appearance, some having very large scales, sparsely distributed, while one sort seems to have none at all.

To catch tench, when he is in biting humour, is easy; and in the early mornings of hot days he is generally that way inclined, and will suck in gently a red worm, discreetly presented to his notice, as he gropes along the bottom.

The carp has a taste of more catholic character, and besides the dainty worm will sometimes approve of paste or gentles, or of cherries, caterpillars, or of tiny new potatoes. To make up for this occasional fine all-round taste he will very seldom touch any sort of bait and requires a lengthy siege, besides the early hours on which the tench also usually insists.

For little carp and tench in dirty ponds these rules do not apply, as they can sometimes be taken as easily in the daytime as roach, or even perch. Even in these ponds the angler will do wisely to use running tackle, for big carp are always possible, and are desperate fighters, having perhaps more broken tackle hanging to their leathery jaws than any other fish that swims.

All kinds of tales are told about the size and age that carp attain, and doubtless these are

partly true. That they reach a length of three feet or more my eyes have told me, and these fish must weigh 8 or 10 lbs. each at least. That there are many much larger, I do not doubt; indeed, they may be seen in cases in every exhibition; and they certainly are cunning enough to have reached at least ages of discretion, and perhaps the one hundred years they are accused of.

The gold-fish which are such hardy pets when kept in globes or tanks, are carp, differing little, except in colour, from the ordinary sort, though there is a gold-coloured fish, of which I saw specimens in the Exhibition alive, which is called the "ide," and is more like a dace.

Gold-fish will live in almost any sort of water, and, unlike trout, are at least tolerant of considerable heat, some of the tanks of waste warm water from the cotton mills in Manchester and elsewhere containing healthy-looking carp, some of which, I was told on inquiry, had been there for many years.

Pike do not feed much on carp or tench, so that the roach get thinned out from park ponds, where pike abound, much sooner than the carp, which thus are left to grow till they rival even pike in size, and these last are sometimes choked, when driven by starvation to try to swallow a 10-lb. carp.

II

Bream and Barbel

Though these fish have many points of difference, they have perhaps even more in common. Both grow large, the barbel often reaching 8 or 10 lbs., while fish much larger have been taken from the Thames or Trent. Bream seldom exceed 5 or 6 lbs., though one of 11 lbs. is recorded from Norfolk.

Both these fish keep, as a rule, to a diet of worms, and feed on the bottom. Naturally they require powerful tackle to ensure their capture, and this makes it difficult to avoid scaring them by the stoutness of your line. This is especially the case with the barbel, a shy and cunning fish, requiring much attention and plentiful ground-baiting by Thames professionals before he will come on, if he ever does.

I saw the following nursery rhyme on the walls of the Exhibition near a case of barbel:

"Sing a song of Shepperton,
A bucketful of worms!
Four-and-twenty barbel
Wouldn't come to terms!
When the punt was fastened,
The barbel swam away.
Wasn't that a nice return
For three half-crowns a day?"

This is the refrain of the barbel-fisher. With

bream it is different, and in the early morning, just between dawn and daybreak, the big brutes will sometimes feed with reckless greediness, and you can half fill your boat in an hour or two.

One of the peculiarities of the barbel is that in the spring, when out of season, he is very fond of running at the spinning baits designed for trout, and often the long-suffering, seldom rewarded Thames trout-fisher will have his heart sent thumping by a sudden run from a big barbel! For some minutes, if inexperienced, he may take it for a trout (for a well-mended barbel is a powerful and a lively fish), and his disappointment is the greater on bringing to the surface an ugly, worthless brute, which, even if not so repulsive, he could not keep, because of bye-laws.

Both bream and barbel are very tantalising fish, for they are often visible in shoals in sunny weather, and will take no notice of the daintiest worm then dropped among them. Now and then a fish may be had by using a single gentle on very fine gut, but the odds are all in favour of the fish, unless the angler is a skilled old hand at using delicate tackle.

CHAPTER XV

Some Sporting Sea Fish

AMONG these the bass is king, as far as English fishers are concerned. Plentiful enough in certain seasons, in certain spots, and on certain tides, he is yet a rare fish to most sea-fishers. Haunting rocky ledges by the estuaries of clear rivers, and only appearing at some states of tides, he may be near you often and never caught, or even seen, except when chasing "brit." Yet you will get a bass now and then by chance on your rag-worm, with its baby spinner, as you trail it for the pollock.

If bass appear, put on either a spinning spoon or a big white fly, and then what sport you may by chance obtain. For he is a splendid fighter for his size, and that is not a small one, for he runs to 10 or 15 lbs. When beaten, he comes in reluctantly with spread fins and back spines erected like a gallant perch, and tries your mettle well before you gaff him.

Next to this grand foeman comes the plucky

pollock, but in tactics he differs from the bass, to suit his quarters. Being deep down among the thick strong seaweed, though not actually on the bottom, he makes a desperate bolt at once for this, his stronghold, and you must hold him out of it, for a 5-lb. pollock takes some holding, and will often break your gut.

He, too, is handsome, when fresh out of water. In shape like mackerel, but much larger, and of more even and less brilliant colouring.

Mackerel are fun when your little yacht is running before a fair breeze and your lines trip along the surface in your wake. Sometimes you pull in several fish at a haul, and they are lively fighters.

In the dark, calm, warm nights, the slimy coiling conger give what some call sport! I don't. It is like hooking serpents in the dark, and very savage snakes they are, biting like their land brothers, though not deadly. Far rather would I fish for those delicious smelts that haunt the piles of little piers at tiny fishing hamlets here and there. You can take them with trout tackle and little white flies. Between a gudgeon and a bleak they seem, and but a little larger. To eat they equal trout, and are much prized by London fishmongers.

The gurnard is a hideous, big-headed brute, which hugs the bottom like a dab or flounder,

though his shape is different, but when hooked he fights fairly well. The red sort are scarcer as are red mullet. The grey mullet is a handsome, chub-like fish, that swims quite near the surface; and if you catch one you may well be proud, for of all sea fish he is the cunningest, and requires the finest tackle and the most cautious strategy.

CHAPTER XVI

Izaak Walton and the "Complete Angler"

TO do justice to the merits of such a work as Izaak Walton's *Complete Angler* is beyond my powers.

I can only repeat, with variations, the notes (always of admiration) which so many distinguished literary men have made upon it. The unprecedented number of editions which have been sold is one of the most eloquent signs of its continued popularity, especially as we see the names of such well-known scholars as James Russell Lowell, Andrew Lang, and R. B. Marston on the title pages, as editors.

When we consider that this book was written in the seventeenth century, and must therefore be in some respects not quite up to date, it is the more wonderful that these new editions should, even up to this present time, be continually coming out. One reason, I think, may be that it is read by many who care little for angling, but admire the

elegant turns of expression and the quiet, and never vulgar, humour with which it abounds.

The edition I happen to have before me is nearly the smallest ever issued. It is one of Pickering's, and I see from a date that it has been in my possession about forty years, so that it must have been one of the first books I ever read. A similar circumstance is recorded in the preface to Mr. Marston's *Walton and Other Early Writers.*

The *Complete Angler* is so well known that I do not propose to go into much detail as to its contents, but I can testify from personal experience to the charm it has for the young, especially to those who happen to be acquainted with the localities Walton describes so vividly. Yet it is not mainly a book for the young, and is indeed much appreciated by grave and reverend seigneurs, such as those with whom the learned Izaak habitually consorted. That a book on such a subject should have gone through over one hundred editions, and should still be thoroughly popular after the lapse of 305 years from the writer's birth, is surely a proof that Izaak Walton possessed, not only talent, but genius.

I know that one of the most celebrated of his editors (James Russell Lowell) disputes this; but on such a subject Mr. Marston, who besides being the editor of the sumptuous "Lea and Dove" edition, is one of the first authorities in the fishing world, has a higher claim to attention than even the

eminent American, and he distinctly decides in favour of the presence of absolute genius.

One distinctive quality Walton shares with another evergreen author, John Bunyan. He is always comprehensible, even to the most unlearned, and yet has beauties which can only be thoroughly appreciated by cultivated minds.

Perhaps we should add also, by hearts not too much hardened by the world; for it is, I fear, a fact that so true a poet as Byron was quite unable to see the poetry latent in Walton's works, or he would not have called him a "quaint and cruel coxcomb."

It is rather curious that Dr. Johnson, one of the reputed revilers of the gentle craft, advised one of his friends to write a life of Izaak Walton.

Short biographies have been prefixed to many of the editions of Walton; and the public is pretty well aware that the gentle Izaak, though engaged in trade in London, was for many years on the most friendly terms with some of the highest dignitaries of the Church. By his second marriage he became brother-in-law to Dr. Ken, afterwards Bishop of Bath and Wells.

After his retirement from business (his wife being dead) he resided partly on a small estate he had bought near Stafford, but chiefly spent his time in visiting either at the houses of the clergy, by whom he was much beloved, or with his friend

Charles Cotton, on the banks of the Dove, in Derbyshire.

Cotton was a man of fashion, and in many respects very different from Walton; and the reverence with which the younger man treated his "Father," as he loved to call him, is a proof that Walton's religion did not make his manners austere, or sour his temper. In fact, the more we read of Walton the more convinced we become that he was one of the most lovable of men.

If further proof is needed, the fact that he lived to the age of ninety, in the most troublous of times, without having an enemy, may be adduced. He died in Winchester in 1683, and was buried in the Cathedral, where a monument was erected to his memory, and also, in 1885, a statue; this latter by some members of the Fly-fishers' Club.

At the 300th anniversary of his birth an inscription, dedicated to his memory, was also placed in St. Dunstan's Church (Fleet Street, London), of which he was at one time a sidesman.

By a curious coincidence I have become acquainted, since the foregoing was written, with some of the descendants of the venerable Walton, and I find that one of them is still an enthusiastic angler. Also that one (whose Christian name is Izaak) stayed awhile not long ago at the "Izaak Walton," in Dovedale.

Turning from the man himself to his most

celebrated work, which it must be remembered was only one among many (for he wrote a beautiful life of Dr. Donne and various other biographies), let us try to analyse its subtle charm.

From the very first page it is apparent that this is no mere fishing handbook. Its semi-dramatic form is, in Walton's hands, well adapted for the purpose of making the book attractive to all, and not to anglers only. This is still further carried out by the plentiful admixture of other, though kindred, subjects in the conversations which follow.

As Walton was thoroughly familiar with the Lea, from Tottenham to Ware, he is enabled to give local colour to perfection; and though we know that now Tottenham, and even Waltham and Ware, are very different from the charming country villages therein described, still those of us who were familiar with these districts only fifty years ago can testify to the truth with which the word-pictures have been drawn.

It is characteristic of Walton, and partly of the age, that, before we get many pages on, fishing seems almost forgotten, and we find him describing, in a leisurely manner, the freaks of Montaigne and his cat, which was "as much amused with his master," apparently, "as he with her." This seems to have no connection with fish, though, indeed, the cat is an affectionate friend of the *successful* angler.

The first edition, published by Marriot in 1653, was quickly sold out, and four more were called for during the author's life, although he was in his sixtieth year when the first appeared. Since his death one hundred or more in all have been published, chiefly in London, Edinburgh, Boston, and New York. It would therefore be tedious to enumerate them all. The most magnificent edition is one of the latest. It is edited by R. B. Marston, and was evidently a labour of love. No pains or expense have been spared in producing it, and the large paper edition, of which only 250 copies were printed, is indeed a sumptuous work. It is in two volumes, and contains a large number of full-page plates representing chiefly scenes on the Lea and the Dove, besides an admirable picture of Walton's statue. Many of these are of great excellence, and the type and paper are of the best. The fullest details procurable, corrected up to date, are given as to Walton's life; and the dates and particulars of all the other editions are printed, as a supplement, by permission of Mr. Westwood.

Nearly every writer on fishing since Walton's time has made some allusion to the *Complete Angler*, and many have quoted very largely from his pages, while not a few have also borne willing testimony to the high character of the author—for instance, the Rev. J. J. Manley, in his *Notes on Fish and Fishing*, expresses the general opinion when he

says, "As a man, a Christian, and a gentleman, his character shines forth as a bright star in the troublous times in which he lived; and as an author he produced a book which will ever live as one of the immortal classics of the English language."

He has been appreciated almost as much in other countries as in his native land, and besides the editions of his book in Boston and New York already alluded to, he has been the subject of various articles in magazines both here and in America. One of these, which has been reprinted by Scribner's, to form part of a book on angling, I have now before me, and in it Mr. Alexander Cargill speaks in the same enthusiastic manner on the subject.

He even compares him with Shakspere, and comments on the similarity of the names of the respective birthplaces of these celebrated men—"Stratford and Stafford." Perhaps this comparison is carrying hero-worship to an extreme, especially when we remember the great reverence shown by our transatlantic brethren for the bard of Avon, to whose shrine they make more pilgrimages than we do. But when Mr. Cargill remarks that "it has been said he possessed all the virtues of a typical squire, unblemished even by the shadow of a vice," he is not far wrong. One of the tributes which ex-

cellence often exacts—parody—has been paid to Walton in two imitations, one called *The Incomplete Angler*, and another, by Andrew Lang, entitled *The Complete Bungler*, both good in their way.

To the fifth edition of *The Complete Angler* (the last published during Walton's life) was added a second part, by Charles Cotton, which made it "complete" indeed; for, accomplished angler as Walton was, he had had very little opportunity during his earlier years to practise fly-fishing; and though he had evidently made the most of his Dovedale experiences by the fishing house which Cotton built for him, and gives very sensible directions on this branch of the subject, he did not pretend to the proficiency in the art possessed by his adopted son.

Cotton carries on the book in a similar form to that in which it was originally conceived; and though his continuation falls a little short of the original in freshness and charm, it is, on the whole, quite worthy to be printed with it, and this is high praise indeed.

The river Dove runs through property in Derbyshire then owned by Cotton, and the second part of the book gives an account of Walton's first visit to this "uncivilized country," and of the lessons in the art of "Angling with fly for trout or grayling in a clear stream" which the master so

IZAAK WALTON'S FISHING HOUSE ON THE DOVE, DERBYSHIRE.

gracefully accepted from the younger, but more skilful, fly-fisher. The idea was a very happy one, and by the aid of Walton it was most successfully carried out.

The instructions given in this book are of considerable use to the young fly-fisher, even to the present day, being mainly founded on the valuable and immortal maxim—"Fish fine and far off,"—which was such a favourite with Francis.

A very remarkable compliment was paid to Walton by Sir Walter Scott when he said, speaking of Franck, his own countryman, who had written a book on salmon-fishing: "I wish that Walton had made the journey and written the book instead." This was on account of the style and spirit of the work, for as to the matter Franck was acknowledged to understand his subject well, or Sir Walter would not have written a preface for him!

It was a fortunate thing for fly-fishers that Walton made Cotton's acquaintance just in time, or the coarse-fishing fraternity would have had him almost to themselves; and, indeed, the subtitle of his work, "The Contemplative Man's Recreation," is even better adapted to the quiet stationary angler of the Lea than to the roving fly-fisher of the moorland streams.

One of the most useful editions is that published in 1889 by Bell & Sons, and edited by E. Jesse,

author of *An Angler's Rambles*, etc. This, besides Walton and Cotton, contains some comparatively modern information as to fishing stations, and a good index. The notes are copious and in most cases very good, and some of the illustrations are of most remarkable excellence.

Those of fish, for instance, by A. Cooper, engraved by J. W. Archer, are most faithful, while the series of plates representing angling scenes, painted by Absolon and engraved by Gilmore, are of well-known beauty. Perhaps the one called "Landing the Trout" is the most charming, as the companion picture, "Landing the Grayling," is marred, to the eye of a modern angler, by the fact that the fisherman has been obliged, from the absence of running tackle and his hampered position, to take hold of the line. There are a number of other steel engravings from well-known painters, such as Creswick and Lely, including good portraits of Walton and Cotton.

For the ordinary angler, only wishing to possess one copy of Walton and not caring to indulge in the luxury of a "Marston" edition, this would seem to be about the best; but they follow one another so fast now that perhaps before these lines are in the reader's hands an edition better than any of its predecessors will have appeared.

Just as this goes to press the prediction is partly verified, for the "Bodley Head" has just been

delivered of the long-expected edition by Le Gallienne, and a very handsome production it is in every respect, though I think the editor errs in saying that Walton's methods are now so nearly useless. But as he "has never cast a line," his opinion on that subject is not of supreme value. In other respects the edition is admirable. It is *the* 126*th*.

CHAPTER XVII

Other Early Writers

ALTHOUGH many authors had alluded to fishing with hook in remote ages, it is believed that Oppian was the first to write systematically on the subject; and I have the high authority of the Rev. J. J. Manley for stating that five books written by Oppian in Greek during the second century are "by no means bad reading."

The first English angling book was that by Dame Juliana Berners, Prioress of Sopwell, near St. Alban's. It is bound up with several other treatises on hunting, hawking, etc.

The reason for publishing it thus, instead of separately, is rather quaint, and though it has often been quoted will bear repeating. It was "That this present treatyse sholde not come to the hondes of eche ydle persone whyche wolde desire it yf it were emprynted allone by itself; therfore I haue compylyd it in a greter volume of dyuerse bokys concernynge to gentyll and noble men. To the intent that the forsayd ydle persones

whyche scholde haue but lytyll mesure in the sayd dysporte of fysshyng sholde not by this meane vtterly dystroye it."

This sentiment seems, in my humble opinion, hardly complimentary to mere anglers. Nevertheless, Dame Berners wrote a good practical treatise, which was doubtless of the greatest use to anglers in her time, and which contains advice that should be carefully noted even by fishermen of the present age. Farmers and owners of land by rivers will also admire her sentiments when she advises anglers to "break no man's hedges" and to "open no man's gates but that ye shut them again."

The conclusion of the book is also quite in accordance with the most advanced ideas in these fish-cultural days, for she distinctly advocates "nourishing the game" and "destroying all such things as be devourers of it."

Leonard Mascall, in 1590, carries this idea still further, and gives instructions for the preservation of fish in ponds.

In 1613 an angling book of a very remarkable character, called *The Secrets of Angling*, appeared, and has since caused much controversy. For many years its authorship was almost as much an open question in the angling world as that of the *Letters of Junius* in the political. It was published under the initials "J. D.," and as the

volume contains verses signed "Jo. Daues," the public concluded that John Davies was the author, though by some it was attributed to Donne.

We have R. B. Marston's authority for stating that the question was finally decided by an entry found in the books of the Stationers' Company, where "the work is entered as being by John Dennys, Esq."

As the book in question claims, with some justice, to be regarded as a poem, the point was one of importance, for it was certainly the first English poem on the subject, and seems to have been one of the best, though excelled by Thomson, and possibly by Gay.

He begins in the Virgilic vein, "Of angling and the art thereof I sing," and in the second verse, which Marston quotes, Dennys very prettily calls upon the Nymphs that preside over the waters and fountains, Sabrina and others, to inspire his song; an invocation to which they seem to have responded, for the work (so far from being the collection of fishing lore strung together into doggerel which one naturally expected in a rhymed fishing book) is as poetical in its verse as even Isaak Walton in his "prose," which is saying much.

The difficulty of making practical instructions poetical has been partly overcome, especially when he describes the way in which the angler must practise humility by lying low.

That part of the history of angling which Marston quotes is most elegantly written, and indeed it seems clear that John Dennys was a poet of no mean order, besides being a good practical angler. It seems strange that he has not taken rank among our minor poets, for certainly many of them, to make an Irish bull, are much more "minor" than he. Possibly he did write some other poems, the authorship of which was successfully concealed, or attributed to other writers.

Among other angling books of about this period, Marston mentions Gervase Markham's *Art of Angling*, and some notes on John Denny, by William Lawson, a north-country fisherman, of whom Marston says, "To Lawson belongs the credit of the best description of fly-fishing for trout previous to Barker, Walton and Cotton."

The next work of note upon the subject was Barker's book, which in one edition is called the *Art of Angling*, and in another *Barker's Delight*. Under the latter name it is often passed over by the angling-book hunter, as Marston observes; and certainly any one publishing a book on fishing should make its subject clear on the title-page.

It is evident that Barker was a genuine angler, and a genial man; and his book is of value, and has been lately reprinted. Walton speaks of it himself with approval, though he seems to have

forgotten it when writing the dedication of his own book, as he there regrets the absence of any work on the subject "worthy the perusal of the unlearned angler."

Colonel Robert Venables seems to have published his *Experienced Angler* within a few months of the date of the first edition of Walton. Though inferior to *The Complete Angler*, it is a work which would have shone brightly in a dimmer age. It has been through several editions, in spite of its partial eclipse.

The next work of note was not published till 1694. This was *Northern Memoirs*, by Richard Franck, and is remembered chiefly because Sir Walter Scott wrote a preface to it, when re-issued at a later date. Franck was a thorough salmon-fisher, and describes that sport well, but seems to have been unable to treat other parts of the subject with anything like corresponding excellence.

In 1714, *The Whole Art of Fishing* was produced; but Mr. Manley (from whose book some of the foregoing information is obtained) warns us that it does not justify its title.

Seven years later a curious work appeared, which is now before me. Its title is *England's Interest, or the Gentleman and Farmer's Friend.* It is written by Sir F. Moore, and printed "for A. Bettesworth, at the Red Lion, in Paternoster Row, 1721."

After treating of the "Improvement of land," the

making of cyder, and growing of trees, he gives instructions in brewing and in horse-breeding. Then he touches on bees and bee-keeping, and next comes "The Angler's Guide," beginning with advice about fish-ponds, and going on to give very sensible directions "How to angle for trout," from which I must quote a few lines. You are to "beat a bush" (beating about "the" bush being *then* useful) "that hangs over the river, and when the living flies drop into the water, take up one of them, and observe the colour of its wings and body, which you must match as near as you can with an artificial fly. Being thus prepared, cast your line, but let as little of it as possible touch the water, lest you frighten the fish from it; then draw it gently towards you, having a strict eye on your hook, and as soon as a trout rises strike tenderly, lest you break your line.

"If you perceive you have him fast, humour him, and let him run which way he will, still keeping him under the bending of your rod, otherwise if he throws himself out of the water, as a large trout will frequently do, it is ten to one but he break your line."

These instructions could hardly be bettered now, except as regards dry-fly fishing, then quite unnecessary. After advising black and red as the best colours for the flies, the author goes on to speak of "the May fly, which you will find on the bodies of trees in that month, and also in June," and says it

"is a killing bait for trout, but then you must be equipt with a short line, and a bare hook," as this fly was used *au naturel.* Although the time of year corresponds exactly to that in which our May fly appears, the fly alluded to was probably the oak-fly, or "up and down," as this is nearly always found "on the bodies of trees" as described. It is a large fly and particularly effective as a natural bait.

It frequents oak trees chiefly, and usually sits with its nose pointing directly downwards. Hence its name. I see that the artificial oak-fly is described at the end of the book. The habits of the true May fly, which is born in the water, are so different that it could not be the insect intended, though it also was much used impaled on the hook as a bait, till lately in England; and is now, on the Irish lakes.

Sir F. Moore continues his instructions by describing live-baiting very clearly; and without that undue amplitude so common in books of the period. Further on he mentions caddis and "gentills," and advises that the latter be kept in bran or sand, as we do now, and goes on to remark that "Carp is not so easy to be managed as other fish." He does not enlarge on the shyness of these fish, like most writers, but, on the contrary, speaks of them as "striving which of them should be most eager in taking the bait." Few of us in this degenerate age have met with this sort of carp.

It should be added that this carp-orgie took place after the swim had been well baited; but it would take a lot of baiting to bring any modern carp into the state described.

Directions are given for drying the line after use. Then follow instructions for barbel-fishing, and advice as to cooking this fish, which, if well cooked, it seems may be mistaken for carp, as may chub also. To our taste these three fish are about equally nasty; but it must be remembered that carp were then, as they now are in Germany, a regular article of food, and were kept in clear water for days before being killed.

"Pike and jacks" are next treated, and we are told how to "snare, trowl, or snap" them. The first method is excellently described; the wire he says "must be drawn over its head," which indeed is the best way, though one would not think so. The other ways "to catch jacks" are also clearly explained.

On salmon-fishing Moore is weak; but he mentions the use of the artificial fly for roach and dace, advising black flies, which are now used with most success. He also gives lists of flies, with their times and seasons, and much very good miscellaneous advice.

After full instructions for dressing fish, from bream to oysters, with a recipe among them referring to a "mallard," he winds up his book by a

short medical treatise, beginning with an account of "The Plague now raging in France," and ending with directions for curing coughs, etc. For a book of 188 pages this is surely variety enough!

Just as the century closed, a rather ambitious work, professing to treat of "Angling in all its branches," was written by Samuel Taylor, and published by Longmans. The claims made by the author in his preface are so wide and deep that one turns to the body of the work, with much curiosity, to see how they can be sustained.

The first part (which contains a fairly comprehensive account of the rivers of Britain and Ireland), though not equal to the promises, seems to give a lot of information which must at that time have been valuable to anglers wishing to roam.

It is curiously incomplete, making no mention of the grayling amongst the Hampshire fish, for instance; nor even hinting at the existence of trout in the Darenth, or "Dart," as he calls it, in Kent; though the Stour is duly credited with its "fine trout." In the second part he gives the methods for taking all sorts and conditions of fish, from salmon to sticklebacks; but there seems nothing very novel in these.

The third part is devoted to the fly, so the preference shown for fly-fishing proves that the author was an enthusiast in this form of the sport. Directions are given for fly-making and

hints as to the use of the natural insect; and the book concludes with some weather wisdom, and seems a fairly useful manual, though marred by too much puffing in the preface.

Soon after this two books were published by two Salters. Robert Salter's *Modern Angler*, and *The Angler's Guide*, by T. F. Salter; the latter of these was popular in its day, and is not altogether obsolete.

In 1816 Bainbridge's *Fly-fisher's Guide* appeared, and being illustrated by good plates, is still valuable.

One or two minor books came out soon after; but we are now approaching the days of "Christopher North" and Sir Humphrey Davy; and this point is a convenient one at which to close the somewhat dry and dusty list of ancients, and turn to the more lively books of comparatively modern writers.

CHAPTER XVIII

Modern Fishing Books

AS the chief purpose of this chapter is to give the student of the art some idea as to the modern books best worth reading, I will try to select and arrange in order those which I have found to be either pleasant reading or of practical use.

Among these the works of Francis Francis claim perhaps the first place, giving as they do the most valuable practical information in a finished literary style. As Francis was for many years the angling editor of *The Field*, he had the best opportunities of acquiring fishing lore, and his books prove how well he profited by them.

A Book on Angling deals with the whole subject in a comprehensive manner, and was in its time quite the standard work upon it. To say that some of its details require revision is not to criticise the work, but only the date of its publication.

His other works on angling, such as *By Lake and*

River, *Hot-Pot*, etc., have the same charm of style; and all of them are well worth the attention of the modern angler.

To those who are interested in the preservation as well as the destruction of fish (and this should include every angler), his *Fish Culture* will possess a strong attraction. Details of this are given among Fish-Culture Works.

Next to Frank Buckland, F. Francis was certainly the most powerful, popular advocate of fish-culture, and his book still remains one of the most useful works, although great strides have been made in the science since his time.

Another writer of the same name (though no relation, I believe) Mr H. R. Francis, has also given us some charming fishing literature, among which may be mentioned *The Fly-fisher and his Library*.

As a practical work, a book by Robert Blakey, *How to Angle, and Where to Go*, claims an honourable place. The first part of it I remember finding very useful many years ago, and though the second must now have become somewhat obsolete, it was at the time of publication a very handy guide.

Leaving the severely practical for a while, let us turn to the works of George Rooper, *In Flood. Field and Forest*, and *The Autobiography of Salmo salar*.

The first of these is full of most graphic de-

scriptions of sporting incidents, and the other is a true poem in prose; and a very amusing and instructive one withal, tracing as it does the life history of a salmon from the day it issued from the egg (a helpless alevin) near the head of a salmon-stream, through a visit to the sea and a trip to the spawning grounds, till it is ultimately duly caught, with fly, and placed on the railway seat, opposite its captor, who dreams the whole poem.

Speaking of prose poems brings Charles Kingsley at once to mind. What can be finer than his *Chalk Stream Studies* (published by Macmillan's in a volume called *Prose Idylls*), and in particular his address to the modest brown-cloaked alder fly, so often quoted?

It is full both of beauty and of truth; but the angler must not suppose the alder to be always so effective, though it doubtless was so in Kingsley's hands, and on those branches of the Wey which flow through the parish of which he was incumbent.

As Kingsley's works are known throughout the whole English-speaking world, it is not necessary to quote from them, but it may be noted that anglers familiar with either Hampshire or Devonshire trout-fishing will find in them a special charm.

Another angling book worthy to be ranked as a classic comes from the pen of a prominent man

of science, Sir Humphrey Davy. His *Salmonia*, which is cast in a similar form to Walton's *Complete Angler*, is almost as successful, and for the fly-fisher possesses even greater charm.

The scene of the piscatorial drama is laid on the banks of the Coln, and its tributary, the Misbourne or Missenden, at Denham, near Uxbridge; and many a specimen of the great trout therein described is still to be seen, if not caught, in that fishful neighbourhood.

For Hampshire anglers a little book by Richard Penn, a descendant from the founder of Pennsylvania, will have special interest.

It is called *Maxims and Hints on Fishing and the Miseries of Fishing, also Maxims and Hints for a Chess Player.*

As Richard Penn was one of the first members of the celebrated Stockbridge Club, which had its head-quarters near Stockbridge, in Hampshire, he was well qualified, by practical experience, to give hints on trout-fishing; but the main feature of the book is the quaint and comic nature of the pithy sayings, interspersed among sound practical maxims.

Some of the illustrations are also very amusing; one of them, depicting the way in which a page (turned keeper) is attempting to land a trout (by throwing away the net and snatching at the line), is particularly effective.

It should be added that in the portion devoted to chess Penn is equally pointed. I have not seen either of these two bound separately, though two editions have been published. Perhaps the connection between the two "contemplative man's recreations" has been instinctively recognised; for the quiet and studious trout-fisher would naturally turn to chess as his winter solace. In fact, I know of many instances among my own friends.

Some works on fishing have such ambiguous titles that the angler in search of fish books is apt to overlook them, and Dr. Peard's *Year of Liberty* is thus handicapped. Yet it seems to have suffered as little from this as a diamond of the first water would, were it shown surrounded by common pebbles.

Its worth has been so universally recognised that it has taken its place as a standard, without question. Its scene is laid entirely in Ireland, and it deals with salmon and trout fishing from beginning to end, both of the book and of the year's holiday.

Dr. Peard seems to have taken his wife and her maid with him, and charming though the tour appears in his graphic and humorous description, it would be interesting to know what Mrs. Peard's opinion might have been, and also that of her maid, especially on the occasion when

the Doctor, running short of artificial baits, borrows (and loses) an ancient and valued spoon from his wife's small stock of silver. If Mrs. Peard had favoured the public with an appendix, giving her version, it would have proved interesting. The book is still of some practical value, though the fishing in Ireland has very much deteriorated since the genial Doctor gave us his charming reminiscences.

Another Irish book (by O'Gorman) was of repute in its time, but is now almost obsolete.

Hofland's *British Angler's Manual* deals with fly-fishing very fully, and contains many good engravings of flies, etc. Writing under the pseudonym of "Ephemera," Fitzgibbon (editor for many years of the angling column in *Bell's Life*) has enriched the literature of the art with many graphic descriptions of angling resorts on the Thames, some of which have been collected in book form.

As intimately connected with fly-fishing the standard work on Entomology, by Ronalds, should be studied even by the modern fly-fisher, though he must be careful to supplement the information thus gained by reading carefully the more recent and exhaustive writings of Mr. F. M. Halford, which will be referred to in their place.

Belonging still to the same period is a hand-

some illustrated volume by Chitty "Theophilus South," a pseudonym adopted, perhaps in imitation of Christopher North, by a southern writer. This deals at length with salmon, trout, and grayling; and contains twenty-two full page engravings.

Allusion must be made to Pulman's works, *The Vade Mecum* and *The Book of the Axe*; because, though they are of interest chiefly to Devonshire men, they deserve to be studied by all anglers who purpose visiting that delightful country, where, as Mr. Senior says, "you are sure to be all right."

Before going quite into Scotland in search of angling literature, we must glance, on our way, at a sumptuous volume called the *Angler's Garland*, published at "canny" Newcastle for north-country anglers. This consists chiefly of poems and songs relating to the fishing in Yorkshire and the border counties, and is handsomely got up and quaintly illustrated.

Considering the remarkable way in which the climate and conformation of Scotland are adapted to the practice of salmon and trout fishing, it is not wonderful that we find a great wealth of books relating to the capture of these fish among the Edinburgh publishers.

First in the list of Scotch writers on the subject is placed, by common consent, that giant in mind

and in bodily strength, the wonderful "Christopher North."

Professor Wilson—for this was his proper title—was for many years the chief editor of Blackwood's celebrated magazine (*Ebony*, as he loved to style it); and this position brought him into contact with most of the finest Scotch writers, and with many notable English ones. Great natural powers, aided by such a favourable atmosphere, enabled North to form a style which for vividness and force is unsurpassed in the English, or shall we say in the Scotch, language.

The work for which anglers will always cherish his memory is called *Christopher North's Recreations*, and consists mainly of narratives of fishing, and other incidents drawn from his own experiences. Very remarkable as some of these adventures appear, we must not refuse to believe them, even when he is represented as walking into a loch while fishing, till actually over his head in the water, and obliged to swim; and still calmly continuing his gentle sport.

His wonderful bodily powers were notorious at the time, and therefore the incident comes within the bounds of possibility; and if it were embellished a little by his skilful pen, can we fairly complain of an exaggeration which affords us such keen enjoyment? Scattered among his works are many valuable practical hints; but he

did not claim to give these details excepting incidentally.

For this branch of the subject we must turn to W. C. Stewart, who treats very fully all branches of salmon and trout fishing in Scotland. In the *Practical Angler*, he gives remarkably clear instructions in the art, and his theories as to worm-fishing in clear water have since been adopted, not only in Scotland, but in many other parts of our country with the greatest success. His advice to use the finest of tackle, with two hooks, and to fish up stream is now almost universally accepted by the clear-water worm-fisher.

The Angler's Companion, by T. T. Stoddart, is almost equally valuable, being a systematic account of the results of the angler's own experience, which is just what an angler's manual should be.

A very interesting book, entitled *I go a-Fishing*, chiefly dealing with American fishing, and written by W. C. Prime, was published by Sampson, Low, Marston and Co., in 1873. It is not a manual of fishing, but a series of eloquent descriptions of sport in the American forests, chiefly about angling; and contains also some exciting tales by the same author.

Although not actually angling books, all works on fish-culture should interest a fisherman. One or two of these have been mentioned when speak-

ing of old books, and among the more modern writings bearing on the subject are the articles by Frank Buckland in *Land and Water*, and *Fish Culture*, by Francis Francis, already mentioned, published by Routledge in 1865. Mr. Francis was then one of the directors of the Acclimatisation Society, and he afterwards was an active member of the National Fish-Culture Association.

In this book he advocates very forcibly the theory that farmers and others owning streams may greatly benefit themselves and their neighbours by a very moderate outlay on fish culture. To some extent this is now done, but it is surprising how slow the British farmer has been to move in this direction. Our Continental neighbours are much less apathetic, and have many of them been very successful.

Francis begins in very early times with Chinese fish-culture (chiefly of carp), and traces the science through the middle ages, in which the monks were naturally its greatest exponents, to the present time; and his book, though small, is very full of useful matter.

Since his time fish-culture has made great progress, the late Mr. Thomas Andrews having been successful in making a remunerative business of his fish-farm, near Guildford, from which many millions of ova have been sent all over the world.

In the pages of the *Fishing Gazette* he has given a clear account of the way in which this farm is carried on, and the size (12 or 14 lbs.) to which he has succeeded in growing his trout.

Perhaps the most complete book on the subject is that by a well-known fish-culturist, Mr. J. J. Armistead, whose *Angler's Paradise* is an elaborate account of twenty or thirty years spent in fish-culture; and tells how, after rearing trout in the Lake District, Mr. Armistead ultimately established himself at New Abbey, near Dumfries, where he has been as successful amid his cold Scotch surroundings as was Mr. Andrews in the sunny south, except that he cannot grow individual trout to such an enormous size, 5 or 6 lbs. being about the limit he has usually been able to reach. He has also written some very interesting articles on the subject, which have been published in various periodicals.

The *History of Howietown*, by Sir J. R. G. Maitland, forms a very handsome contribution to the literature of fish-culture, giving as it does an elaborate account of successful operations at Howietown. Some of the illustrations are very clear and good, and the whole work is most carefully executed.

CHAPTER XIX

Current Fishing Literature

SELECTIONS having now been given from the angling works published from the times of Juliana Berners till the middle of the present century, and also from various fish-cultural works of all dates, it only remains to mention the more important of the fishing books that have appeared during our own times. Among these, the works of Mr. W. Senior ("Red Spinner") certainly require a prominent position.

Waterside Sketches is perhaps the most popular of all, and has sufficient literary charm to have made the name of any ordinary writer, quite independently of its special interest to the angling fraternity.

The following will give a good idea of that small part of the book which is in verse.

"Lo! here by this spot where the merry trout gambol
At noon lies the only protection from heat.
At evening perforce I hitherward ramble.
Is not the quick flash of the water-wheel sweet?
Hush! the maid of the mill walks forth by the stream.
Shall I follow, or still idly angle—and dream?"

The two concluding lines answer this question sufficiently.

"And I live at the mill, whipping trout from the stream.
I followed, was hooked, and need never more dream."

Of equal interest are *Near and Far* and *Travel and Trout in the Antipodes*, while his numerous and powerful articles in the *Field*, of which he has for many years been angling editor, testify to his skill both with rod and pen.

Among his other works, *By Stream and Sea* and *A Mixed Bag* are the most notable, the latter being a particularly charming collection of "storiettes," as he calls them. The first of these, "The Man with the Bag," carries with it the sympathy of the angler from beginning to end, while several of the others, and notably the "Legendary Grayling," appear to me almost flawless. I cannot quite believe in the remorse said to be felt by the man who ultimately captured that fish (especially as it was in a perfectly sportsmanlike manner), but the account of his sorrow finishes up the tale very neatly. That the Derbyshire people were annoyed at having their only big grayling caught, and found to weigh but two pounds, is natural enough.

The latter part of the book, consisting of a chapter devoted to each month, except December, is equally charming, and of even more practical use.

While alluding to the editor of the angling column of the *Field*, I must testify to the valuable nature of that portion of the paper. In it appear every week articles by the leading writers on the subject, and to that, and to the *Fishing Gazette*, conducted by Mr. R. B. Marston, anglers have owed a debt of gratitude for many years. Only a man who has acted as editor in some capacity knows what hard work the post involves. When we consider that the editors of such columns have continually to select, and also to curtail or remodel articles, it is evident that the labour and responsibility is very great, and that it requires a thoroughly capable man to undertake the task with success.

Another veteran who has done good service in the angling world is Captain Dunne, a thoroughbred Irishman, who, under the pseudonym of "Hi Regan," produced, some years ago, a most valuable handbook called *How and Where to Fish in Ireland*. It is most conveniently arranged, and has a capital index; and if another edition, brought up to date, were published, it would, no doubt, be again very popular, especially as Captain Dunne is now even better known as the author of *Here and There Memories*, published by Fisher Unwin, and so favourably reviewed in many influential quarters.

Turning to books dealing with special sections of the art, there are none to surpass, either in the

clear definiteness of their technical instructions or the sumptuousness of their binding and illustration, the works of that prince of dry-fliers, Mr. F. M. Halford.

His first important book, *Floating Flies and How to Dress Them*, was a great success, and fully warranted the production of a second and still more elaborate one, *Dry-Fly Fishing*, which seems to me to approach as near to perfection as is given to mortal man. The illustrations are equally admirable, and combine in an uncommon manner the merits of clearness and beauty, though they are evidently intended rather to aid the reader to thoroughly understand the methods of casting described in the text than as mere ornaments to the book.

The representations of flies in his first book are also exquisitely finished, and these two will remain for many years, I venture to think, the standard works on the subject in every respect.

His third production, *Making a Fishery*, has a very special interest for those anglers who have means and inclination to enable them to create, or greatly improve, a trout fishery on a small river. I remember reading the book with eagerness at the time of its publication, and was exceedingly pleased with it.

I have heard since that difficulties arise when you want your large trout, which have been pro-

duced successfully enough, to feed on surface food. Many of the biggest (of two or three pounds each), it seems, persist in grubbing on the bottom, which is very ungrateful, after all that has been done to persuade them to rise in life. I fancy if Mr. Halford would only be contented with the free-rising trout of about a pound each he could be happy.

Another book of his, on Dry-Fly Entomology, has lately been issued by Vinton. The plates, which I have seen, are particularly clear.

Turning to books which avowedly confine themselves to practical matters, precedence must be given to Mr. C. H. Cook (John Bickerdyke) in his *All-Round Angler*; for although J. H. Keene produced, through the same publisher (Upcott Gill), a work which professes to be equally practical (indeed, it is called *The Practical Fisherman*), the scarcity of illustrations in its too closely printed pages, and the want of system in its form, have put it out of court.

"Bickerdyke," in his Preface, promises (though with evident reluctance) to confine himself entirely to practical matters. And this he does all through, with the result that, for completeness and thoroughness, combined with reasonable brevity, the work holds the field, and will long continue to do so. For such a comprehensive volume, covering as it does all kinds of fresh-water fishing, from worm-fishing for gudgeon to fly-fishing for salmon, and

also including a treatise on sea-fishing, its price (5*s.* 6*d.*) is so reasonable as to require special mention.

It must be noted that there are over 150 engravings, all of which assist the reader to understand the careful and clear directions for arranging tackle, dressing flies, etc., which are given in the text. With many of the methods of fishing therein described I am familiar, and in all these cases my own experience agrees with Mr. Cook's. I am, therefore, willing to believe that in the other instances he is equally correct.

Of Mr. Cook's other works, *Sea Fishing* comes first, from an angler's point of view, as it is of the same practical character as the last, and treats very fully of the use of the rod in sea-water. It forms one of the celebrated "Badminton" series, and, like the rest, is beautifully got up, and brought well up to date.

Of a somewhat different type, and to the general reader of a more attractive character, are two other books by the same author, entitled *Days in Thule* and *Days of My Life*. Both these are written in a bright and lively style, and show that the writer is not by any means a mere practical handbook maker, but is first a literary man and afterwards an angler.

Another good point is the excellence of their illustrations, the frontispiece of *Days of My Life*,

representing "The Little Skipper," being an exquisite piece of work, while many of the photographs are most effective, "The Mountain-surrounded Lake" particularly so. The picture of the reluctantly laughing Highlander in *Days in Thule* is most amusing! Mr. Cook has written successful novels and other books of a general character, but these do not come within our scope.

Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell, to whom we are indebted for some of the contents of the "Badminton" fishing volume, and also for other works on the same subject, is always well worth reading, and is familiar with all forms of the sport, and perhaps, most of all, with the pursuit of the noble salmon. Some of the illustrations in the "Badminton," representing, if I mistake not, Mr. Pennell contending either with salmon or trout, are most charming, worthy, indeed, of the book itself, which is saying much.

Among other recent works of a more or less practical description is a treatise entitled *Fly Fishing: Salmon, Trout, and Greyling*, by Dr. Hamilton, published by Sampson Low & Co. in 1884. This refers only to game fish, and is a most scholarly production, worthy of a place in every gentleman's library. It is beautifully illustrated and well got up in every respect.

The Book of the Grayling, by T. E. Pritt, deals chiefly with the north-country grayling, and is

quite the standard work on that particular subject. Mr. Pritt was a Leeds man, and took a prominent part in the management of northern trout and grayling rivers. He was also a keen angler, and most attentive and liberal to strangers wishing to try the northern streams. His grayling book contains very clear and practical directions for "swimming the worm," a method much in vogue among Yorkshire grayling fishers; and also equally careful information as to what flies to use in the northern counties for that capricious fish. The illustrations of these flies are very delicate and beautiful.

Since Mr. Pritt's death, which left such a blank in the "North Countrie," another work of his has been published, entitled *The Angler's Basket*.

This consists mainly of articles originally published in the *Yorkshire Weekly Post*, and very witty many of them are. That they are not all connected with angling can hardly be reckoned a fault, for the tales are at least told by a true fisherman, and the brief epigrams, such as "There is no pocket in a shroud," have, most of them, plenty of point.

The book was published by subscription for the benefit of the widow, but can be had, I think, from Heywood's, of Manchester, at a reasonable price.

The mention of Manchester reminds me that a

series of articles, entitled *Anglers' Evenings*, has lately been published there (Heywoods). These are mostly written by north-country anglers, and are nearly all of a most interesting character.

Speaking from memory, I fancy the sketch called "The Wye and the Wherefore," by Mr. Sumner, is one of the most amusing. It consists of an account of a tutor's fishing tour with his four pupils—"the coach and four," as Mr. Sumner calls them.

This tutor's fishing must have been somewhat disturbed by his lively charges, who persist in "rescuing" fair damsels (who are merely crossing the stream in their usual way) and performing other unnecessary and embarrassing feats of valour.

A Letter from an Angler's Wife is perhaps the gem of this whole collection of three volumes, and has given as much amusement to the ladies as to anglers themselves.

Her sojourn in a Highland hut, during wet weather, is most graphically described, and the coming home to "hot roast slippers" of wet fishers, much less "clean" than the salmon they catch, is feelingly alluded to, as is also the state of the breakfast-room as they left it when going out.

Theakston's British Angling Flies, revised by Mr. Walbran, is also a credit to north country literature.

Angling Sketches, by Andrew Lang, are charm-

ing throughout, and we suspect Mr. Lang of being almost as good an angler as author, in spite of disclaimers.

One of the most attractive of angling books that have ever appeared is *Walton and other Early Writers*, by R. B. Marston. It is elegantly got up in the old style, by Elliot Stock, and the type is particularly clear and fresh.

One of the objects of the book is to correct the impression that the works of Walton and the other old writers, such as Juliana Berners and Mascal, are useless as practical treatises. Mr. Marston quotes extracts from these works which clearly prove their practical value, even at the present time.

Perhaps the most charming part of this book is the preface, which gives us a glimpse of Mr. Marston's school days, and incidentally drops a very timely warning as to the overmastering nature of the habit of collecting old fish-books. There are also interesting references to the author's father, "The Amateur Angler," who wrote *Days in Dovedale*, etc., which have charmed all by their scholarly style and frank acknowledgment of inexperience.

Another very elegant volume is *Lyra Piscatoria*, by "Cotswold Isis" (the Rev. Richard Glover), alluded to more particularly later on. Some of the poems in this collection are of a very high character, both as to technical construction and

beauty of idea, and would warrant Mr. Glover in aspiring to flights of a more ambitious character. The same author also wrote a little handbook on the Dry-fly, the instructions in which are admirable in their brevity and clearness.

Moss from a Rolling Stone, by Sarcelle (Mr Payton), so well known to *Field* readers, is an interesting collection of sketches, chiefly relating to fishing in foreign waters. As consul at Mogador, etc., Mr. Payton has had ample experience of the scenes he describes so well.

A scholarly work by the late Rev. J. J. Manley, entitled *Notes on Fish and Fishing*, was published in 1877. It treats the whole subject; but special attention is given to fly-fishing, as Mr. Manley was an enthusiast at that form of the sport.

Among modern American fishing works, perhaps *Norris' American Angler* is one of the best. The engravings of common American fish, such as the "weakfish," etc., which we in England often read of, but never see, are of especial interest; while his chatty accounts of days on rivers, entitled "Noonings," are pleasant reading. Dr. Henshall on Black Bass is also well worth study, for he is *the* authority on the subject.

Two other American publications have recently come under my notice, *Hopkin's Pond*, by R. T. Morris, and *Angling*, a collection of articles from *Scribner's*.

The first of these shows Mr. Morris to be a true prose poet. Some of his sketches (as, for instance, the account of the baby grouse searching in vain for their mother) rise into pathos, while others are equally attractive from their delightful humour, which, though distinctively American, is never vulgar.

The "pondy" smelling *Hopkin's Pond* is one of the best, and the parts of the book relating to fishing seem particularly true to nature.

The collection published by *Scribner's* is also fresh and crisp (especially the accounts of contests with the tireless land-locked salmon), though the details as to Walton are not all to be depended on, "Wareham" not being one of his haunts. Would that we had such fish in England as the "winanishe," which Creighton describes. Many of the engravings are also very effective.

The Salmon Fly, by G. Kelson, is an important treatise on the subject, and as the author is a well-known expert, it deserves attention from every salmon-fisher.

By Hook and by Crook, from the pen of Mr. Fraser Sandeman, so well known from his interesting articles on salmon-fishing in the *Field*, is a charming work, with capital illustrations, representing incidents in the writer's experience.

Mr. Sandeman does not confine himself to generalities, and leave one in doubt as to whether

anything worth having was caught at all, but goes into most interesting details as to weights, etc., of the salmon he takes; and this, to most anglers, is a most attractive feature in any angling book. Another book by the same author, entitled *Travels in Norway*, is equally good.

The same may be said of *My Life as an Angler*, by Mr. Henderson, a celebrated Tweed salmon-fisher, since deceased. It is an account of the incidents of a long life, devoted, as far as the sporting part was concerned, to the pursuit, and as such has a special interest for anglers. Let us hope that many of our best-known fishers will follow so good an example.

One of the most recent presents to the Fly Fishers' Club is *La Truite*, by G. Albert Petit, (Paris, C. H. Delagrave), and having just finished it, I can record the impression produced while still fresh: it is one of unmixed satisfaction. The author is clearly a genuine lover of the fly fisher's craft, and has also the gift of imparting his knowledge with clearness, and withal in a scholarly manner, not devoid of humour, and with becoming modesty. All success to such a book. Its get up is also admirable, and the illustrations very good.

CHAPTER XX

On Angling Rhymes, with Quotations

ONLY a short time ago, in a leading article in a daily paper, the question was actually propounded, "Can a sportsman be a poet?" the writer continuing by saying, "Can black be white?" and so on.

It is therefore evident that some people consider sport an enemy to poetry.

Passing lightly over the fact that Shakespeare, to whom no one denies the rank of poet, was certainly a sportsman, of a kind, when he chased Sir Thomas Lucy's deer, we may remark that hunting and other active, and perhaps noisy, sports have certainly inspired some very capital verse, chiefly in the shape of songs written by enthusiasts in some form of the chase.

With regard to fishing, it appears to me that this "contemplative man's recreation" is about as suitable an occupation for a poet as can well be conceived.

If I were not an angler, and wanted to be a poet (which I don't), I would take up the sport, for the sake of the freedom to roam the fields and river banks unquestioned. For truly a trout-rod is a magic wand to drive away too curious intruders on one's solitude—human beings as well as cattle.

Familiar then with the most romantic and sequestered nooks among the streams and mountains, the angler, with a soul, ought to develop at least some little aptitude for appreciating poetry; and if his temperament serve, he will often acquire a knack of making verses, which, if wise, he burns, and if particularly foolish, he calls "poetry."

I am speaking now of the rank and file of anglers; but among them all there will be now and then one with a real gift for metrical composition; and the leisure and solitude which trout fishing gives will enable him to cultivate it to advantage.

As a matter of fact it has done so in many cases, as for instance in those of Burns, Charles Kingsley, etc. But before we reach these comparatively modern poets, there are two or three earlier writers to refer to.

Among these John Denny is the first of any note, and he is a very favourable specimen of the angler-poet.

"The lofty woods, the forests wide and long,
Adorned with leaves and branches fresh and greene,
In whose coole bowers the birds, with chaunting song,
Doe welcome with their quire the summer's Queene.
The meadowes faire where Flora's guifts among
The silver skaléd fish that softlie swimme
Within the brookes and cristall wat'ry brimme.
All these and many more, of His creation
That made the heavens, the angler oft doth see,
And takes therein no little delectation
To think how strange and wonderful they be;
Framing thereof an inward contemplation
To set his thoughts from other fancies free.
And whiles he lookes on these with joyfull eye,
His minde is rapt above the starry skye."

In this we have a fair specimen of the style of the author of *The Secrets of Angling*.

Both Walton and Cotton were poets; the former seems to me more happy when he keeps free from the shackles of rhyme and metre, and writes what Kingsley afterwards christened, *Prose Idylls*.

Cotton dances prettily in the fetters, and one of the irregular stanzas in his "Retirement" (which was dedicated to Walton) at least is worth quoting:—

"Dear solitude, the soul's best friend,
That man acquainted with himself dost make,
And all his Maker's wonders to entend,
With thee I here converse at will,
And would be glad to do so still;
For it is thou alone that keep'st the soul awake."

Perhaps the most elegant of stanzas relating to angling is in Thomson's "Spring."

It is as admirable for the truth of its descriptions as for the beauty of its blank verse; and though long for a quotation, should not be curtailed as it usually is.

"Now when the first foul torrent of the brooks
Swell'd with the vernal rains is ebbed away,
And whit'ning down their mossy-tinctured stream
Descends the billowy foam: now is the time,
While yet the dark brown water aids the guile,
To tempt the trout. The well dissembled fly,
The rod fine-tap'ring with elastic spring:
Snatched from the hoary steed the floating line,
And all thy slender wat'ry stores prepare.
But let not on thy hook the tortur'd worm
Convulsive twist in agonizing folds,
Which by rapacious hunger swallowed deep
Gives, as you tear it from the bleeding breast,
Harsh pain, and horror to the tender hand.

When with his lively ray the potent sun
Has pierced the stream and roused the finny race,
Then issuing cheerful to thy sport repair.
Chief should the western breezes curling play
And light o'er ether bear the shadowy clouds.
High to their fount this day amid the hills
And woodlands warbling round, trace up the brooks.
The next pursue their rocky channeled maze
Down to the river in whose ample wave
Their little naiads love to sport at large.
Just in the dubious point where with the pool
Is mixed the trembling stream or where it boils
Around the stone, or from the hallow'd bank
Reverted plays in undulating flow,

There throw, nice judging, the delusive fly,
And as you lead it round in artful curve,
With eye attentive mark the springing game,
Straight as above the surface of the flood
They wanton rise, or urged by hunger leap.
Then fix with gentle twitch the barbed hook,
Some lightly tossing to the grassy bank,
And to the shelving shore slow dragging some,
With various hand proportioned to their force.

If yet too young and easily deceiv'd
A worthless prey scarce bends your pliant rod,
Him, piteous of his youth, and the short space
He has enjoy'd the vital light of heav'n,
Soft disengage, and back into the stream
The speckled captive throw. But should you lure
From his dark haunt beneath the tangled roots
Of pendant trees the monarch of the brook,
Behoves you then to ply your finest art.
Long time he, following cautious, scans the fly,
And oft attempts to seize it; but as oft
The dimpled water speaks his jealous fear.

At last, while haply o'er the shaded sun
Passes a cloud, he desp'rate takes the death
With sullen plunge. At once he darts along
Deep struck, and runs out all the lengthen'd line,
Then seeks the furthest ooze, the shelt'ring weed,
The cavern'd bank, his old secure abode,
And flies aloft and flounces round the pool,
Indignant of the guile! With yielding hand
That feels him still, yet to his furious course
Gives way, you, now retiring, following now,
Across the stream, exhaust his idle rage,
Till floating broad upon his breathless side,
And to his fate abandoned, to the shore
You gaily drag your unresisting prize."

Among modern angling verses I have seen none to surpass those contained in a little work published by Horace Cox, and called *Lyra Piscatoria.* The author writes under the name of "Cotswold Isis," but it is an open secret that these poems are by the Rev. Richard Glover; and he certainly has no need to blush for the book.

Perhaps the finest poem in it is one on a subject dear to all anglers—Isaac Walton. It was read at a dinner given in honour of his tercentenary at Broxbourne, and breathes throughout the very spirit of that tranquil angler.

It is too long to quote in full. This is the first stanza,—

> "A hush, a solemn hush; one moment now,
> Amid these festive rites so glad and gay,
> While we to Walton's name uncovered bow,
> And to his memory reverent homage pay.
> And where more fitly could such ritual be
> Than on the banks of his belovèd Lea?"

This proves that Mr. Glover has the true poetic vein, and moreover that he takes the trouble to see that the mould in which he casts his liquid ideas is elegantly formed and highly polished.

One other stanza must be quoted at risk of giving an inadequate impression of the whole poem, which is entitled "The Anglers' Concert," and is as melodious almost as the songs of the birds which it describes. After alluding to these,

and also to the flash of the kingfisher, and the music of the waterfall, he concludes with,—

"Now flush the waters in the afterglow
That eastward reddens from the crimson west,
Awhile the rooks with weary wing and slow
Flap homeward to their fledglings in their nest:
And on my listening ear, so far below,
Their cawings sound a lullaby of rest,
Nor harsh the tones, but full of sweet repose;
Nor fitter music could the concert close."

This reminds one a little of Grey's "Elegy," and yet is not an imitation in any sense.

In some of the shorter poems the style is more airy, and in some cases very bright, as in the second, called "The Trout,"—

"Curved like an Indian bow,
Bow and arrow in one,
Spotted with crimson, with gold aglow
And bright as a summer sun;
With fins like a lady's fan,
Yet strong as a canvas sail,
Cleaving the stream as a cutter can
The sea in a Biscay gale."

But the whole book is worth reading by any lover of poetry, and also by any lover of angling; and for those who like both it is a treat indeed. Two of the best of these poems are included in a little volume recently published by Walter Scott, and called *Songs and Ballads of Sport*.

This collection also contains some good old

songs on fishing by Walton, Stoddart, Doubleday and others, and concludes with some stanzas in praise of salmon *spearing*, which prove I think the editor was not an angler, or at least had not the true angler's hatred of killing fish, out of season, with a spear! As it happens the verses are very effective, which only makes one regret the more that their author (A. B. Street) did not choose some less repulsive subject.

Perhaps the best of these poems is the well-known "Taking of the Salmon." Its rhyme and rhythm are as charming as is the truth of the description, and the last four lines live in the memory,—

> "Hark to the music of the reel!
> We listen with devotion;
> There's something in that circling wheel
> That stirs the heart's emotion!"

A very fine collection of old angling songs is contained in *The Newcastle Angler's Garland*. The chief authors of these are Joseph Crawhall (the editor), and Robert Roxby and Thomas Doubleday.

There are some good verses also by Wm. Andrew Chatto, of which the last must be quoted. It is from "The Fisher's Call," 1837.

> "In the pools deep and still where the yellow trout lie
> Like the fall of a rose leaf we'll throw the light fly.

Where the waters flow gently, or rapidly foam,
We'll load well our creels and hie merrily home.
Then up, fishers up, to the waters away!
Where the bright trout is leaping in search of his prey."

One of the best of the joint productions of Robert Roxby and Thomas Doubleday is set to "Auld Lang Syne." It is too long to quote in full, and is also in rather broad lowland Scotch.

"Though Cheviot's top be frosty still
He's green below the knee,
Sae don your plaid and tak your gad
An' gang awa' wi' me!"

The verse lately quoted from W. A. Chatto's poem is contained, I see, among others, in a book which has since come into my hands.

It is the last volume of the Badminton series, and entitled, *The Poetry of Sport*.

Like the rest of the set, it is beautifully got up, and has some most effective illustrations, both new and old; but the part of it dealing with angling hardly comes up to the high expectations naturally formed.

Most of the best verses are from *The Fisher's Garland*. Among the others are examples from Kingsley, from Mrs. Hemans, and from Bunyan (the last as to trout-tickling).

The verses by Kingsley are capital, but not "poetry," and he would certainly not have

claimed that they were! They are on the "south-west wind," and the first verse runs,—

> "O blessed drums of Aldershot!
> O blessed south-west train!
> O blessed, blessed speaker's clock,
> All prophesying rain!"

Mrs. Hemans entitles her poem "The Angler," and that is all the angling it contains. She evidently thinks a dragon-fly is a May-fly; but what else could be expected?

There is one really curious reprint. It is a copy of Walton's "Angler's Song," with the music, and half of it is printed upside down, to enable the bass and tenor to read from the same copy, when the book lay between them.

In *Waterside Sketches*, already referred to, is a capital song, written for the author of the book by Mr. G. Manville Fenn, the refrain of which lingers in the memory.

> "And my rod light and limber, my line true and fine,
> My creel on my back, and a scrap when I'd dine,
> Sweet nature around me, the world's troubles far,
> Believe me we fishers philosophers are."

Not that it is desirable to dine on "scraps," but that is just the way you feel when the fish are rising and some one comes out to tell you that "dinner is waiting."

It is among the minor poets mainly that we

find poems on fishing; but references to the sport are not wanting in the highest quarters; and in Tennyson's "Miller's Daughter" is a pretty word picture of a young (and not very enthusiastic) angler who

> "Angled in the higher pool."

after which it continues,

> "Then leapt a trout. In lazy mood
> I watched the little circles die;
> They past into the level flood,
> And there a vision caught my eye;
> The reflex of a beauteous form,
> A glowing arm, a gleaming neck."

Would it be irreverent to imagine that this was drawn from some of the poet's Lincolnshire experiences, and that possibly the maid in question was not unaware of the reflective powers of the "sleepy pool above the dam?" Some girls know them.

A dainty volume by John Buchan, entitled *Musa Piscatrix*, has lately been published by J. Lane. It consists of a selection of verse, relating, more or less, to angling, by various writers, from Shakespeare to Andrew Lang, and concludes with some musical stanzas by the compiler, addressed to the shade of Isaak Walton; and the last verse runs thus:—

DARENTH, LION FISHERY.

"For there the waters fall and flow
By fragrant banks, and still below
The great three pounders rise and take
The palmer, alder, dun or drake.
Now by that stream, if there you be,
I prithee keep a place for me!"

One more quotation and this chapter on angling rhymes, which is to me a labour of love, must conclude. This time it is from a paper published in New York, and called "Shooting and Fishing." The writer, who is too shy to give his name, though he need not have been so, says in the first verse of his song,—

"Ah! my heart is sick with wishing
For my old fly-rod!
Wishing for the next vacation,
Health and rest and recreation—
Do you think it odd
How I long to go a-fishing
With my old fly-rod?"

This has a lilt which reminds one of some of the plaintive negro songs. No doubt many of us would decidedly prefer a new fly-rod; but that is "another story," and would require quite a different style of versification.

CHAPTER XXI

The Lessons of a Diary

HOWEVER inapt may be the pupil, it is difficult to avoid learning something in turning the pages of a faithful record of the results of a quarter of a century of fishing.

To the stranger, no doubt the crude and bald statements it contains must be very dry reading, only made tolerable by the possibility of learning a few wrinkles from the experience of another.

The effect in the mind of the angler who wrote the brief memoranda he now refers to is quite different.

All the dry bones come to life, and around the nucleus of fact afforded by such words as "Test. 11 . 10 lb. 5 oz.," and "Darenth . 20 . 10 lbs. 3 oz.," or, as a contrast, "Annan, etc., . 68 . 8 lbs. 8 oz.," how the covering of circumstance and surroundings will gather, and detail follow detail, till a perfect and nearly accurate picture is formed in the mind of each of those long past days of pure enjoyment.

There are others of a very different nature, when snowstorms, torrents of rain, too brilliant sunshine, or even the flashes of extra stupidity which visit us occasionally, have marked the page with ducks' eggs, such as "Test . o . o . o . (lost 5)," or "Avon. 1 . 1 oz. (retd.)." Between the two extremes come the many average days when a pair of anglers sally forth, hopeful as ever, each morning for a week or two, and fish in waters until then unknown to them. Gradually gaining the requisite familiarity with the ways and manners of its inhabitants, they bring home each evening a somewhat heavier bag. The improvement may not be regular, as weather is such an important factor. Also anglers and fish will sometimes have their silly days, with results on the bag of opposite characters.

The average weight of trout caught each day on different rivers is a much disputed point; and whilst it is the custom to return all fish under a fixed standard, it must remain very uncertain. Of course, the average of those retained can be easily found, if anglers will weigh their fish properly; but to estimate accurately each fish that you have put back is far from easy. Yet it ought to be done, especially in such rivers as the Test and Kentish Stour, where the limit is 13 inches or over.

Some high authorities, such as F. M. Halford,

are beginning to think that the returning of fish is overdone, and results in leaving the rivers full of trout so shy as to be practically useless; the better plan, according to this theory, being to keep out all fish excepting very tiny ones, and to make up for the depletion of the rivers by more liberal stocking.

However this may be, it is certain that the average of trout taken is very different in Scotch and Devon streams from that in Hampshire, or even in Kent and Hertfordshire. In the Scotch burns it is under 2 oz., while in the Test it is over a pound, and in the Itchen not much less, about ¾ lb. perhaps. The Darenth yields something under ½ lb., so that many have to be returned. I must have put back about one hundred last season alone. The stream at Wycombe gives about the same result, and the limit being higher, most of the fish go back. In Yorkshire and Cumberland the average is nearer ¼ lb. than ½ lb., and in Devonshire it is nearer 2 oz. than ¼ lb., but here it is customary to keep everything over 2 oz.

In Cornwall it is much the same, while, curiously enough, some streams (tributaries of the Wey) which run through the northern corner of *Hampshire* contain trout averaging but little larger than the Devon fish, two days' fishing giving forty-nine fish weighing but little over 10 lbs. There is one river in Devon, the Otter, on which the average is

certainly well above this, for in the portions of the Otter I have fished trout of 6 oz. to ½ lb. are more numerous than those of ¼ lb. or less, the average being about 6 oz.

I think the Axe is similar in character; but my record is so meagre that no fair average could be struck. Certainly fish of ¾ lb. are not uncommon, though very hard to circumvent. In Wales I found the average the smallest of all, but this was in autumn, and among brown trout only.

One habit in which too many anglers indulge, that of weighing their *basket* literally with the fish, and forgetting to deduct its weight, must either be stopped or allowed for, or it will vitiate all calculations. It may be unimportant if the basket, weighing say 1 lb., is crammed with fish, and scales 10 lbs. or more; but if (as generally happens) its contents vary from 1 lb. to 5 lbs., the unfairness of the practice is evident.

It is in this way that anglers in Scotland and Devon persuade themselves, and sometimes others, that their fish average about ¼ lb., while the fact is, that 2 oz. would be nearer the mark.

Another feature of a diary should be the record of unusual incidents.

I note, for instance, that when wading a broad shallow on the Darenth I trod upon a large eel, and happened to fix it so firmly that, with the help of my rod-spear and my companion's net, it was

duly secured, and the lives of lots of little trout consequently saved.

Several times I find records of swallows or swifts taking my flies and being brought to hand and released, and once of the same thing happening to an unlucky bat, and also to a vole. One of the swifts took the fly while the line was fully extended at the back, and the sensation of apparently hooking an angel above the shores of Test was very curious!

Swans, ducks, and geese will often take your flies if you are not careful, on trout tackle they are very troublesome, and the best way is to break promptly.

On several occasions I have hooked large trout while standing among the branches of trees near the top, and have sometimes been successful with them in spite of the difficulties. I am often advised, before casting for a big fish, to consider the possibility of landing him; but I sometimes cast first, and consider afterwards, if necessary. It seldom is. Very often a large trout in a difficult position has had little experience, and when he is hooked acts in some unexpectedly foolish way, and enables you to overcome difficulties which seemed insuperable.

The landing of two fish at a time is not uncommon, and I have never had much difficulty with them, as those that have served me thus have not

been large. On one occasion I noted that the second fish took the fly while the first was being played.

Once I remember the cast broke, and the two fish went off down the stream looking very much astonished and reminding me of the Siamese twins. Once I had two "rainbows" at one cast; but this was in a pond connected with a fish farm, and the next fish I caught there was a "zebra" (a hybrid) of about 2 lbs. All were, of course, returned uninjured. Trout will sometimes follow a hooked comrade, and have been taken out with the landing net when so doing. With perch and chub I have seen this occur, and they were not little things, but the portly perch of the Hampshire Avon.

Perhaps these are the finest fish of their kind in England; my biggest were not taken there, but in a little lake in Suffolk, and my companion had to hug them in his arms to get them out, as we had no net. The best of these is staring at me now from his glass case, and has paid a visit to South Kensington to exhibit himself at the "Fisheries." He was just under 4 lbs., but not being a fat fish, looked larger.

The diary to which I am referring goes back without a break for a quarter of a century, and contains memoranda extending to about forty years in all.

Occasionally mention is made of the sport ob-

tained by other anglers, besides the one who keeps the record.

I find, for instance, that one wet evening at Hilgay Fen (a most unsuitable name, for it is neither hilly nor gay) he saw a friend take six perch, weighing nearly 10 lbs., while he could not get a touch. In the same river there is a record of taking a bream of 2 lbs. on single hair, and a pike of 5 lbs. on fine gut.

At Waltham, in the same year, two chub of 2 lbs. each fell a victim to the red palmer within a few minutes, and several smaller were taken, the total being seven fish weighing just 7 lbs. The capture of a ¾ lb. trout in a small Cornish stream is also recorded.

For heavy takes nothing seems to approach the Norfolk waters, though the best total recorded (forty-five fish: 48 lbs.) is not nearly equal to the weight I have since seen credited to one rod in one day. Close to the entry referring to the Suffolk perch mentioned some pages back is a pitiful account of small fry caught in the New River close to London. The Docks at Rotherhithe are alluded to, but seem to have yielded chiefly small fish.

Much the same results seem to have been obtained from the Thames, though one day near Windsor the roach ran comparatively large. The dace, chiefly taken with fly, were decidedly under the average of either Colne or Hampshire Avon.

In the Lea, while spinning for perch in a mill-tail, a good barbel was hooked and landed, with an umbrella for landing-net. The same weapon came into use on Hickling Broad, where a friend had hooked a rudd of 2 lbs. 10 oz.; and my wife once landed a good trout for me in the same way. This rudd is now reposing in its case to amuse the patients in the doctor's waiting-room. Other rudd, of 2 lbs. or so each, were taken that day by worm, close to the surface, in a high wind.

Then comes a record of some flounders taken from near the stone coping of Ramsgate Harbour with impromptu tackle. A similar experience is recorded at Torquay; but the fish were not flounders, and the tackle in this case was that used for trout, with bits of white leather on the flies.

This plan also succeeded well at Salcombe among the atherine or smelts, many dozens being taken after one had been cut up for bait. On the Ouse, at Bedford, a curious take is noted with single hair. It was a roach of about a pound, with fragments of *gut* tackle still attached.

Accounts of sport at Hendon, Dagenham, and many other London resorts contain little to interest, though the numbers of fish taken seem large sometimes. From the upper Lea I see a record of a 3-lb. trout with fly, and also of another, but little smaller.

From Broxbourne a trout is also recorded amongst a lot of coarse fish, while the "Olde Ferrie boat" at Tottenham, which Walton has made immortal, is often mentioned, chiefly for its regular supply of roach taken with hair and paste; but now and then appear more interesting items relating to success in that historic spot with fly, natural and artificial.

Other stations on the Lea have their regular records, especially Wicks' Water and Chingford Mill, the spoil from which must have numbered thousands in all.

The roach were never very large, though two were hooked on one evening which would have weighed about 3 lbs. together if secured. One broke the single hair on an attempt being made to land it without net. The other was hooked within five minutes, also on hair, and a net was then procured by a wayfarer, and the fish, which weighed 1 lb. 6 oz., is now in its case in one of the inns close by.

Many a good barbel broke the hair in those old times, though only two were landed, and these on stronger tackle. Yet good barbel have been taken on single hair when circumstances were favourable and nets were handy.

The grasshopper used to be a most effective bait on this river, both for chub and roach. The chub were from 1 lb. to 2½ lbs., and the roach sometimes large. Perch could be had near Chingford

Mill in these good old times with the common (or garden) worm, and did not need humouring with minnow. Fish of a pound a piece were often taken thus.

In the mill-tail, or a few yards below more often, good dace would take the black-gnat freely. They were not the size of Avon fish, but ran much larger than those of Thames. They lay like chub, close under the shadow of the trees, and required some care before you could extract them from their lairs in the rapid run. This dace-fishing gave the practice required for trout, and after about 1876 the diary becomes a record chiefly of success, or sometimes failure, with the trout and grayling.

It was in 1877 that a week among the Devon trout is recorded; the chief previous mention of that lovely fish being many years earlier, and relating to the Cornish streams. In this Devon visit several dozen good trout were secured, some being over half a pound a-piece, while one was certainly nearer the pound, but this was landed for a friend.

Many of the best of the fish took the natural oak-fly in the still, deep reaches under the stately trees just above Totnes weir; but a good proportion were caught in orthodox fashion with the artificial farther up the river.

Soon after this date begins the regular record of Darenth fishing, and the first entry shows that

a brace of good trout rewarded the angler's earliest attempt on that since so familiar stream. The Lion at Farningham was the classic spot, and since that date its name is constantly appearing, though still better sport is often jotted down as being secured on other parts of Darenth.

Most of the red-letter days are records of sport on private water on this lovely stream. Here and there are entries of big trout which mostly owed their death to putting trust in feathery golden-sedges, though I see that the best of all, a handsome fish of 2 lbs. 3 oz., took an August dun. Well I remember the delighted look on the face of the lad (my companion's son) as he skilfully scooped out the glittering prize for me.

Near the same spot I afterwards secured another fish (with coachman), which was just as long, but barely half the weight, so thin and lank was he. Also in this part of Darenth we took some fontinalis, which we carefully returned; splendid fish they look, with their red bellies and rich colouring.

On another page of this old diary I find a record of some very different sport on Scottish Annan.

Here my host (a well-known salmon-fisher) took me out for the late evening fishing. We each got a few small trout or herling, but the prize of the evening was a grilse, hooked by my companion

on a little fly. How I rushed through the shallows across the river (not without risk, as holes abound) to land that 7-lb. beauty in my arms!

More tranquil are the scenes recorded in the long-continued series of memoranda as we near the present date. On the Wycombe fishing in Bucks some sport seemed always to attend us, and on one occasion I remember seeing freshly taken a fish of 5 lbs. 10 oz., much larger than any we could ever capture, though once I rose one something similar. The greatest number recorded for one day on this pretty stream is thirty-six, but these were small.

In Darenth twenty, some of them a pound apiece, is the highest figure in a day, and ten in one evening, this latter being on the water of the Plough at Eynsford; but the usual evening's sport was but a brace of half a pound or less apiece, while blanks are not unknown.

Intermixed with quiet records such as these are brief accounts of struggles with stormy weather on Scotch lochs, and long tramps over moor and heather in search of scarce sea-trout. Also now and then small space is occupied with grim accounts of slaughter in some fenland river, where the roach and bream are reckoned by the stone.

Sea-fishing has its turn in Cornwall and in Devon, and the weights brought home put all the rest in shade; yet my favourite—trout—and

favourite means—the fly—still hold my heart, and less and less of space is now devoted to the coarser race, while every detail of the capture of a goodly trout is lovingly recorded.

Particulars I note of wind and weather here set down tend to upset the old tradition of the bad effect of breezes from the east. Condition of the water is often noted, and also the flies thereon, their times and seasons. It is partly this that gives its value to a diary, and makes it easy to extract many useful lessons from these dry details of a past which might have been almost forgotten, and its teachings lost, but for this modest record

CHAPTER XXII

The Fly-fishers' Club

AS we are only in the fourteenth year of our existence, our chronicles are, as yet, somewhat scanty.

Turning to a letter which I received on December 16th, 1884, from Mr. R. B. Marston, I find that to him is undoubtedly due the credit of calling the meeting at the Caledonian Hotel, Adelphi, which led to the formation of the Club.

The names of Messrs. W. Senior, H. Ffennell and Cholmondeley Pennell are mentioned in this letter, as having been already consulted, and as approving the idea.

As a matter of fact Mr. Senior has ever been (next to Mr. Marston) the most active organizer of the Club; and although I was Hon. Secretary for the first year, I am unable to claim any considerable share in its progress, especially as I was compelled by ill-health to retire before we were thoroughly established.

As Hon. Treasurer, Mr. Marston continued to

enlist members in a most active manner, and Mr. Senior and Mr. Ffennell and many other members of our committee were also indefatigable in the cause.

Mr. Burnett gave his valuable services as Hon. Secretary for some time, and was succeeded by Mr. D. Wilson, who (assisted most ably by Mr. Booker) held till lately that arduous post. It is now occupied by Mr. Bowater Vernon.

The Club differs essentially from most fishing clubs in that it is established for purely social purposes, and has nothing to do with competitions of any sort, and does not even endeavour to provide its members with a fishery. Opinions have been expressed that it should undertake this latter duty; but on the whole it has been considered best to keep to its original programme as a social Club only.

Its gatherings on Thursdays and Saturdays are often well attended, and indeed some members are there nearly every day, and find it a most convenient centre.

The Library, under the care of Mr. Norris, has grown quite extensive, and includes some very valuable books, both ancient and modern, besides some hundreds of ordinary angling works. Many papers and magazines are to be found on the Club tables, and every convenience is afforded to members wishing to use the Club as a place

in which to conduct their correspondence or to meet their friends.

Round the walls are arranged a fine collection of trout and grayling; and on one of the tables is a cast of the monster trout from Loch Stennes, which weighed twenty-nine pounds. The room is also decorated by pictures of fish and cases of tackle; and is, in fact, an enlarged "Angler's Den." Every year a dinner is given, at which some hundreds of members and guests usually sit down, and at which speeches are made in praise (sometimes mixed with a little gentle ridicule) of our favourite sport.

Within this Club are found every variety of the genus fly-fisher, from the ancient veteran who looks down upon us all with tolerant superiority, to the callow youth who, in his raw enthusiasm, would pull the whole affair about our ears to model it afresh.

Every sort of fly-fishing has its representative advocate, from the head centre of the inner brethren, who thinks it almost profane to speak disrespectfully of the dry-fly, to the reckless advocate of crude whipping with three formless insects on the tumbling waters of a Devon stream.

Many of us take great interest in the gentle art of fly-making, and the fur and feather book is quite an institution. There is also a query and suggestion book, in which the more experienced

or more travelled angler can answer queries placed therein by neophytes.

Letters containing particulars of trout and salmon fishings to be let in a private manner are fastened on a green-baize board with other notices.

The room has ample space still left in which to try a rod upon occasion, and is indeed often used for that very purpose.

It must not be supposed that the conversation at the Club consists entirely of fish talk. Men who meet there have often other hobbies in common, besides fishing. Some of these, such as entomology and fish-culture, have a close connection with the object of the Club, and as such are frequently discussed in full conclave; but the conversation often flows into channels far removed from any fishy streams, and the chess-board which adorns one of the tables is even sometimes brought into requisition.

I suppose it is possible that we have among us men who never fish; and who, if asked why they spend their evenings there, give the stereotyped and sufficient reply, "I'm a married man."

CHAPTER XXIII

The Sorrows of the Angler's Wife

"WHATEVER you do, Mary, never marry an angler, or you'll wish you'd never been born." This I quote from memory out of a most amusing "letter" in *Anglers' Evenings.*

The letter is written with true feminine vehemence, and the picture of her miseries is so overdrawn and caricatured by the writer that we feel instinctively it is not intended as a really "bitter cry."

Nevertheless, I fear the angler's wife may sometimes feel inclined to wish, not that she could have remained unborn, but merely unmarried, or that she had chosen a partner with drier amusements, —a collector of stamps or beetles, for instance.

These might indeed be bores, as dry as their pursuits. Let them. An angler, she may make reply, is worse than any ordinary bore, for over and above his exactions in the way of lie-believing, he will stay out half the night and come in looking radiant with a 2-ounce trout.

And his clothes! Although he wears what he calls waterproofs, their main use seems to be to prevent the water which has soaked through them from running out again as freely as it should. Sometimes, when new, they really do keep water out; and, oh, the consequences to the underclothes!

Of one thing you can never convince an angler: no one ever admitted that he could catch cold when fishing. No; it was going out to church that drizzling evening, or it was when he took you to that little dance, and had to wear dress clothes and paper shoes. Or at the Club dinner, when he did the same, you say; but no, it couldn't have been that, for then they talked fish rot.

Then the holidays! In olden times, before he was so smitten with this horrid mania, he would go to Brighton, Broadstairs, anywhere, and lie about contentedly and smoke or try to read while all the children made sand castles round his head. But now, how different! It may be true that as "the children" nearly all are married they couldn't well be castle-building round his prostrate form; but *their children* could; and what were grandfathers made for but to play with them?

Now is it not absurd for a man of his age (he's nearly fifty) and dignity to go off with Tom, who unluckily inherits the family failing, and remain away for days together (fishing, they say they are), in all sorts of queer, outlandish places where no

trains can go and postmen are seldom seen, or so they say, when I wonder that I get no letters?

I must admit that, for an old man, Jack's health is good, in spite of fishing-colds; and that Tom is not so bad as some young fellows are, although he does go fishing

On rare occasions, too, they bring home fish which, if they buy them, must have cost a mint of money, for I saw trout marked *2s. 6d.* a pound at our fishmonger's only yesterday. But, after all the sums they squander on rods and lines and the little barrel-organ things they wind them on, something *ought* to be brought home. Then the bills for millinery (artificial flies, I mean) each year. The money to pay one of these would keep me well supplied with gloves for months!

You will hardly believe it, but I've known Jack pay even for *leave* to fish, as if anybody cared whether you took a little trout or two out of their water. I wouldn't even ask leave. The trout grow there just the same as the birds in the air. You don't have to ask leave to shoot swallows. Not that I hold with killing these pretty little things, unless their wings get fashionable for your hats.

If Tom and Jack would be content to go together and come back quietly in time to dine at six, like reasonable beings, we could forgive them, if they bring some trout; but when they will meet "friends" upon the river, and bring home, long

after dinner time, a brace (I think it is a brace, or braces, that they call them) of noisy smoking men, my patience, which you know is great, will get exhausted; and after locking up the whisky I retire.

Now Jack calls this inhospitable, and asks me whether I'd prefer that he should take them to the Club and make a night of it. Of course I have to give in; and in the morning how the curtains smell of smoke, and if I hadn't "lost" that key worse might have happened!

Many a time has my dear mother said, "I cannot understand your patience with that man! The smell of him and of his creel is enough for me, and sends me off to bed." Poor mother! so it does; and yet he doesn't seem to mind a bit, but talks away about the monster fish he didn't catch just as if he hadn't noticed how she sniffed.

Ah, well! There is no cure, I fear, for such complaints, and I'm really almost fancying they must be catching. Only yesterday, the first of April, of all fitting days, I caught myself balancing that little rod he bought for Amy, and wondering whether, at some future date, before I was quite hopelessly decrepit, it would be worth my while to try it. Amy managed it; and should a British matron let her daughter always take the lead?

CHAPTER XXIV

Hints and Maxims

WHEN you hook two good trout at once, if you try to dip out the upper one with your net before attending to the other, a scene of excitement will ensue which (when attended by the loss of your fish) will act as a wholesome warning to try the other way next time. It need hardly be added that it may be years before you have another chance.

When you are wading during a high wind, take the opportunity to change all your flies. You will find it capital exercise to chase your floating fly-book down the stream when the wind blows it out of your hand; but the complications ensuing, on seeing your hat (and best gut cast) following your book, are apt to be trying, even to the "contemplative man." It is in such circumstances that "silence is golden," speech being apt to be too emphatic.

Another advantage of wading is that it affords the trout more variety in choosing his method of

escaping. He may, and often does, elect to rush wildly between your legs, leaving your cast (minus one fly and one fish) sticking in your waders. If any spectators, male or female, are present, your attitude at this juncture is apt to appear undignified.

If you are in the habit of using a thumping great fly when trying, after dark, for the monsters then on the prowl, do not trouble to change your fine cast. No doubt you will get broken now and then; and the fish (which you will of course have described as a 4-lb. trout, hooked on a tiny midge) may be afterwards taken by a "friend," and be found to be a 2-lb. chub with a Dusty Miller in his lip. A touchy man might be vexed at this; but think of the joy it occasions to your "friend," and all the other members of the fishing club.

When you have to strip and dive after a fish that has fouled your flies in a deep hole, put your clothes under the guardianship of your friend's dog. He will guard them most faithfully till (*and when*) you return. If your friend has a "Kodak" handy, this is better fun still.

Keep your fly-book in your creel (not in your pocket). This plan gives the trout a better chance; for if you leave your creel on the bank when wading a pool, you have to wade out and in again whenever you want a fly, and this reminds them that there are "strangers present."

Have your rod brilliantly varnished; it looks very slovenly to carry soiled tools; and if the flash, as you wave it, does drive away all the trout in the country, it may at least attract the admiration of any ladies you may chance to meet.

Some fussy anglers make a point of attaching the reel-line firmly to the barrel of the winch before winding it on. This could only be of use in the event of a fish having strength and energy to run it all off. Surely such a trout would deserve his freedom. He would also afford amusement for some time to his companions, for it might be an hour or two before he could rid himself of his 40-yard tail.

You will also be advised to let your flies drop lightly. If you do, it will be very difficult to tell where they do fall, to look on the spot you intended to place them being of course useless. Now, if you use three flies, say two Alexandras and a large Jock Scott, there will be no such difficulty, and of course the fish will also know where to look for them. If you can't see or hear your flies yourself, how can you expect the trout to do so?

When you do hook a fish, remember that your object is to place him on the bank. Unless he is very large, your strength will enable you to do this promptly—provided, of course, that your tackle holds. If not, get stronger next time.

A lot of nonsense is talked about "treading

softly," as if you were a burglar. If the fish are afraid of a manly footstep on the bank, they must be a poor timid lot of things not worth catching.

To be certain of sport it is best to see the fishmonger in the morning. Don't trust to finding trout on the slab on your return. There will be nothing but kippered herring and crabs; and even your wife cannot pretend to believe that you caught these with a fly.

A really good angler always fishes with a boatman or other skilled attendant, for otherwise he is liable to lose his reputation if he chances to be a little out of sorts, or gets sleepy after lunch. A good boatman needs no detailed instructions under these circumstances, and, when you wake, the fish you have caught will astonish you. If you should notice the wet state of the casting net, remember that undue curiosity is a vice unworthy of the male sex.

CHAPTER XXV

Angling Dangers

TEMPTED as we are for the sake of our anxious wives and mothers (to say nothing of our cousins and our aunts) to ignore the risks that fishers run, it would be better possibly to be more frank.

Compared with the scenes of carnage on the football field, no doubt the angler's life is one of peace and safety; yet the sport has its risks, and though not frequent they are sometimes grave.

Take, first, those incident to boating. You may be the image of prudence, always calmly seated and doing your level best to keep the shifting thing in trim; but what is to prevent your companion from standing up and waving his rod, with a fish on the end of the line, wildly round his head, as he shouts off the effects of his application to the stone bottle?

This I have seen done (in another boat) on the Norfolk broads; and it may result, when boats are ricketty, in very sudden and complete disaster.

On some lakes, storms are not uncommon, and the risk then run by anglers is very real. The best advice upon the subject is briefly, Learn to swim well, and then do not rely entirely even on that; but take all reasonable care as well.

Next to boating comes the use of waders, much to be avoided when that is possible, but often quite essential to good sport. Opinions on the wisest way to wade are much divided, some advocating heavy boots and some light.

Without pretending to decide, it seems to me likely that fairly heavy brogues will keep the wearer steadier than light shoes, and will protect the stocking better. They would also tend to keep one's feet downwards, if washed away, and thus, in moderate depths of 5 feet or so, give one a better chance. Yet they must hamper a swimmer, if he has to go some distance. Again the remedy is special caution. If you must wade deep, let the handle of your net be strong, and shod with iron ; and always feel your way.

For ordinary wading, about to the knee, this is not necessary ; but the wader will sometimes want to cross the river, and it is then some little danger may come in. You can see the bottom plainly, and it is under 3 feet. In this you may be right (though water is very deceptive), but have you allowed for the current, which will, if great, not only tend to upset you altogether, but will raise

a wave 2 or 3 inches high upon your legs, on the upper side. This difference may be just enough to swamp your waders, which, if not dangerous, is at least most unpleasant.

When not wading, a man has many a chance to get a ducking, if his flies are caught on bushes; and sometimes in scrambling along the rocky sides of rushing rivers, with a lively fish; and cases have been known in which the salmon has been only too truly victor, and has killed the man.

Of land dangers we may speak safely in a lighter vein, though, if a man really does meet a savage bull, and has only a cold river for retreat, he doesn't see the comedy. Bulls are scarce, out of tales; and I have never even met an angler who has been attacked by one.

Cattle will often threaten you, and are best avoided; yet a little judicious waving of your lissome rod will soon remind them of the drover's whip, and make them keep their distance.

Of bull-dogs, kept by jealous farmers, I cannot speak from any personal experience; though when met with they must be even worse than bulls.

A raw recruit, just at your elbow, learning to throw a fly, is perhaps as dangerous an animal as you well can meet; and salmon-fishers have a wholesome fear of fishing near one.

There are some nervous people who assure you

they would on no account go fishing, for fear of getting wet. Without denying that wet feet are bad and a wet back is worse, we may say that the health gained by ninety-nine excursions on the river banks, in which we can keep dry, does more than balance a bad cold, caught on the one exceptional day. Take waterproofs by all means; but do not expect to keep bone-dry in stormy weather. When you do get wet, keep moving; and but little harm will reach you.

That all this alarm about wet feet, etc., is absurd, is shown by the large number of doctors whose main delight is fishing; and who advise their patients (not with any sinister intent) to follow, though in moderation. in their moist and muddy footprints.

CHAPTER XXVI

A Fishless Fish Tale

THE strangely sceptical spirit too often shown by the uninitiated when listening, or not listening, to a fisherman's simple narrative is most painful to the feelings of a man who knows how carefully the slightest exaggeration is avoided by every angler. Advantage is meanly taken of the necessity which compels us to dispense with witnesses as a rule when catching, or losing, our biggest trout, and instead of being generously trusted we are cross-examined unmercifully, and, if discrepancies should be detected, are even blamed as if *we* could help one of our fish growing a few ounces after he was caught. They *will* do so. Then, again, when a man is openly romancing, why take him seriously?

If he tells you some "ancient and fish-like" tale about the size of that pike which was not weighed, but which lowered the level of the lake four (or 400) feet when taken out, it is hardly

neighbourly to go home and complain that the men at that Club try to deceive you.

Some of the most curious tales I have heard from anglers, beginning as usual, "That reminds me," have no fishing in them. Are these innocent narratives to be doubted merely because they are told by anglers?

Some day we shall have the cross-examining barrister asking in his severest tones of a witness he wants to discredit, "Now, on your oath, sir, have you ever been an angler?" and, on receiving a negative reply, continuing, "But perhaps you once knew one?" This being most indiscreetly admitted, the prompt "That is *quite* sufficient, sir," will then direct the jury to put no faith in *that* witness!

After this introduction you may perhaps expect some tales of extra height; but I fancy they are pretty well played out, even in their natural home—the States, and the one that chances now to cross my mind is devoid of wild sensation, and scarcely mentions fish.

Arriving rather early at Dr. Vincent's, we had some few minutes to wait before dinner. It was rather a special occasion, as the doctor had lately brought home his bride.

"The ladies won't be down just yet," said he, as we settled ourselves for a chat, "and we have just

time, I think, for a little tale I've long meant to tell you.

"You know my ways, and how I have to pay old Adams a regular visit every week, though he is out of my proper round. You know also that in the summer I always take a black bag—of 'instruments'—and how I bring him several fishy corpses as a rule (and very good eating they are). This innocent deception you can forgive in a struggling doctor, who has to keep up appearances and always to wear a thoroughly professional hat and coat.

"Well, one morning, before you came into this county, I had started, as usual, by the 9.40 on my little railway run to Axton.

"My old cap and coat, with the little short-jointed trout rod, were safely hidden in the black bag by my side. Just as we were starting, a lady got in and seated herself opposite, facing the engine. Her handkerchief was held to her face, and she either wished to avoid recognition or was suffering from neuralgia. Charitably presuming the latter, I offered to close the window. She motioned me to desist. Leaving it open, therefore, I suggested changing seats, that she might be out of the draught. To this she assented, and while the exchange was being made I caught a clearer sight of her face, and must say that if it was swollen, then swelling is remarkably becoming to some faces.

"Somehow we got to Axton more quickly than I expected, and I gathered up my traps and jumped out rather hurriedly, though not without catching her eye and receiving a fairly gracious bow of farewell.

"Having paid my formal visit to poor old Adams, I was off, like a schoolboy let loose, to the little inn at which I change my things before beginning fishing. I went upstairs three steps at a time, and opening the bag beheld—ah, what? An ivory brush and comb, a pair of tiny slippers, and underneath a pair—well, well, I mustn't profane the mysteries of a lady's toilet any further! Imagine my consternation, for of course you guess what had happened—the change of seats had led me to take up *her* bag in jumping out.

"My plight was bad enough, for my rod was gone, and with it all chance of fishing; but hers of course might be far worse, for my old cap and coat would hardly suit her style of beauty.

"I hurried back to the station only to find that no train would run that way for hours. "I wired an account of the mistake to various stations, but got no reply. While still wondering how to restore the stolen property, a train from the opposite direction bustled in, and out stepped a man I knew well. Watkins had once acted for me as *locum tenens*, and I had good reason to remember him. Among his other misdoings he had passed

as a bachelor, though I had afterwards found out he was a married man.

"He did not see me, and I heard him express great annoyance in the strongest of language at his train not having stopped, as he had been told it would, at the previous station of Atbridge. The station-master expressed the usual official regret, and suggested that a fly could be hired close by, and would get him back in an hour. Watkins assented so promptly that I, knowing him to be as mean as he was deceitful, at once concluded his business must be important.

"As he hurried off to the railway inn for the fly, I noted that he was got up in a most brilliant manner, and could not help fancying he might be meditating matrimony, or rather villainy, for I knew his wife was still alive.

"Remembering that the station-master happened to keep a horse, I asked, as a special favour, for the loan of it, and then, though not attired for riding, started off by a short cut for Atbridge. I arrived long before the fly could get there, and took up my position in the inn parlour near the village church.

"Soon a fly drove past, but not *his* fly. It stopped opposite the church, and I came out towards it. At the porch alighted my lady of the train, looking very flurried, chiefly I believe from having lost her 'things.' "His fly was now ap-

proaching, and I could also see within the church the vicar standing by the altar, and everything in readiness for the 'sacrifice.'

"Before the second fly had quite come up, I walked into the church, and the old vicar, seeing much was wrong, led me into the vestry, where I told my tale.

"He knew me well, and did not hesitate to believe it, though told by an angler. 'I had my doubts,' he said, 'of that man; but everything seemed regular, and the lady is of age.'

"If any uncertainty had remained, Watkins soon removed it; for on catching sight of my face, before a word was said he turned tail and, jumping into the fly again, was driven to the station. We avoided a scene for the sake of the lady; but the man richly deserved to be prosecuted for attempting bigamy. I can only hope he had to pay heavily for that fly and any other arrangements he had made.

"The lady's feelings were mixed indeed; but she had the sense to see that she had narrowly escaped from a thorough scoundrel. The old servant who was with her had been equally deceived, and seemed by far the more indignant of the two; and we decided to trust her to go home with her mistress, unaccompanied by me.

"We took care afterwards to make sure that no further harm had come to them. So quickly had

it all happened that it occasioned comparatively little excitement in the village; and to this day I'm not sure that the old blind aunt with whom our lady lived has ever heard the tale."

Just then the ladies made their appearance, and dinner was announced. As the doctor introduced me to his bride he said, "This is the lady of whom we have just been speaking."

CHAPTER XXVII

Our Traveller's Tale

On an Underground Lake

ONE of the members of our Fishing Club has been all over the world, and often tells us tales, more or less true, about his adventures, but never by any chance mentions angling, and we all wondered why he joined.

One evening, after much fish had been talked, while he sat silent, he suddenly exclaimed, "If there is anything I *do* detest, it is fishing, and some day I'll tell you fellows why." We knew his ways, and were not annoyed, but one said, "Why not now?"

"The traveller" roused himself, and said, "Very well, then; you will see I have my reasons."

It was a wild and rocky district—full of gullies and deep clefts, masked by a sparse growth of

bushes. I was trying to guide my mare safely through the pitfalls all around, when suddenly she fell forward without the slightest warning, and pitched me clean over her head, right into the jaws of a yawning chasm.

I caught at the bushes on its brink, but missing them, went straight down, expecting death. The fall ended in a splash, and not much hurt, I struck out instinctively, and found I was swimming in an underground lake, on the surface of which floated a thick scum of petroleum. As I looked anxiously around a light became visible, which I found belonged to a boat, rowed by two atrocious-looking ruffians, more brute than human.

They hauled me into the boat, showing much surprise by their gestures, and soon we reached their cave. Here was another loathsome brute, engaged in cooking lumps of coarse meat, just cut off the carcase of a hideous fish, which was hanging from an iron hook.

It seemed to be a kind of Silurus, somewhat like a very ugly sturgeon, and was about the size you sometimes see these creatures, stretching the whole length of a fishmonger's shop. Among its other deformities I noted that where its eyes should have been were only little dents.

I was destined to know more of these uncanny-looking animals.

Hungry as I was, but little of that oily food could

be induced to stay inside me, and I soon lay down in a corner, and curled up to try to sleep.

Dreams of slipping down the greasy floor into the black lake haunted my stony pillow; and when a few struggling rays from the upper air penetrated into the dismal den, I woke with a violent start, and very nearly realized my visions.

My companions were eyeing me grimly, and muttering strange gutturals to one another. A big knife had flashed ominously once; but he who held it was pacified by one of the others, and they only motioned me to make haste with breakfast. I swallowed a few more morsels of the stinking fish, and then, obeying further signals, got into the boat once more.

Here I found two lines were ready, and as soon as we reached the neighbourhood of the opening through which I had fallen (a favourite spot of theirs), one of these lines was put into my hands.

For hours we waited, with never a bite, and my companions were looking savagely disappointed, and apparently using the strongest language at their disposal, when at last I felt the welcome tug. My line was nearly jerked from my grasp, and when I gripped it tighter, the violent fish would certainly have pulled me overboard had not my legs been held from behind. As it was I got a mouthful of that vile petroleum! My blood was up now! Recovering my position and setting one foot

on the thwarts, I put my back into the struggle, and only let my fish have line by inches. Ghastly smiles lit up my companions' faces as they recognised my gameness, and soon I was rewarded by finding that the fish was getting under control, and coming near the boat. No time was wasted in fancy playing, and before long the rough iron hook they used as a gaff was in his ugly side, and the vast brute lay all along the bottom of the boat. I felt a thrill of triumph, but the pair of ruffians exchanged discontented glances, as if to say, "What a little one!"

The next excitement came even before I had been able to replace the lump of fish we used as bait for these vile cannibals. The chief had hooked a fish, and now I was to see what a really big Silurian could do! Coil after coil of stout line had to be given out, and all the while the brawny muscles on that chief's massive arms were kept well stretched. This lasted long, for hours it seemed to me, and all this time the heavy boat was being towed in the wake of the savage monster, inferior to a tarpon only in lacking jumping power.

Round and round that lake we went, but the steady strain began in time to tell, and line was gradually recovered, till at last the surface of the oil began to swirl, as the brute came up. Then a broad tail splashed the oil in fountains as he dived again.

When at last, half dead, he floated alongside, stretching far beyond the boat at either end, 'twas plain the gaff would be quite useless. Seeing this the knife came into use, and the brute's throat was deftly cut. In his death throes he flounced and tossed in such a violent manner that we narrowly escaped capsize, but we conquered, and the gaff now came in handy. While held with this a rope was put through his gills, and he was towed ignominiously in our wake, and at last deposited, half a ton of slimy fish, hideous enough for St. George's Dragon, safely in our cave.

We made a meal off a steak from my little one, which was about eight or ten feet long, and then my companions stretched themselves along the floor to sleep, and I was left in peace to ponder means of ultimate escape. Perhaps I wasn't then very anxious about this, for I really did enjoy that sport at first; but another day of such company, such food, and such fatiguing fishing sickened me, and I devised a plan, wild indeed and reckless, but just barely possible.

We carried a little roughly made lamp always alight, as it was mostly very dark in this dismal lake. On this my hopes were fixed. We had anchored next day, as usual, just under the best light, and while my companions fished my lot was to look to the boat. As luck would have it, both hooked fish at once, and now my chance had come!

They were both in the stern, and I was about midships. Snatching the lamp, I leant over the side and set on fire the oil that coated the lake, and what a blaze there was!

Thinking it an accident, both the ruffians jumped wildly out, beyond the ring of flame, and swam for shore, abandoning their fish. Now was my time for action. The boat was beginning to burn, of course, but would last a few minutes. I had a spare line, with its weighted hook at hand, ready coiled. This I threw, like a leaded lasso, upward at the opening through which I had first fallen. Twice I missed; and my boots had already taken fire, when at last the huge hook caught firmly on a bough. I hauled myself hand over hand up the strong line, while my foiled captors pelted me with stones—here is the mark of one.

It was a mercy no slip occurred, for a fall into that blazing lake must have been inevitably fatal. When at last I reached the upper air, I fell forward fainting, and slept long. I was at length awakened by a cold nose investigating the back of my neck. My faithful mare had been grazing around the spot on which her master disappeared, and had found water and enough coarse grass to keep her going for the two or three days she had to wait.

You know the rest. I indiscreetly told the tale when at last I found the chums that I had lost;

and I do assure you solemnly that not one of them would believe a word of it!

"I believe *that*," said I, and the meeting was adjourned.

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